Foreword by Syed Farid Alatas

Islam and Socialism

Translated by Sharifah Afra Alatas

Professor Dr Syed Hussein Alatas

ISLAM AND SOCIALISM

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Gerakbudaya
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FOREWORD

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Islam does not specify a system or political economic order which must be practised by its believers. What is specified and encouraged in Islam is a system of morals and behaviours which should underlie any and every political economic system which has been established by Muslim societies. In the history of Islam, there have been a variety of political economic systems from the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) until today. During the early development of Muslim society in Mecca and Medina, the political economic system comprised of at least two types, that is, the petty commodity mode of production and the pastoral nomadic mode of production. During the Ottoman Caliphate, the Safavid Empire and the Malacca

Sultanate in the pre-modern era, their political economic systems were characterised, in general, by the prebendal feudal mode of production. Nowadays, the system of most Muslim countries is capitalism or the capitalist mode of production.

In the modern period, some Muslim scholars and thinkers had an inclination towards socialism which they considered to be far more in line with Islamic values in comparison to capitalism. In his work, *Islam and Socialism*, Syed Hussein Alatas expresses his view that socialism exists in Islam, in the sense that Islam is actually socialist in nature. Generally, there is no conflict between Islam and socialism. What is opposed by Islam are specific types of socialism. Here we need to differentiate between religious socialism and irreligious socialism, as was done by the renowned Javanese figure, Haji Omar Said Tjokroaminoto, in his work which was also titled *Islam dan Sosialisme* (*Islam and Socialism*).

Syed Hussein Alatas says that we as Muslims do not have to wholly reject the approach of dialectical materialism, but only specific aspects of it which are in conflict with religion such as its conception of the origins and role of religion, moral relativism and so on.

We may add here that socialism should not be rejected because of its relation to Karl Marx, the founder of dialectical materialism. Many individuals and segments

of society have an aversion to Marx's ideas and Marxism. In actual fact, not all of Marx's ideas are contrary to Islam; many important ideas developed by Marxism can contribute to the progress of our society.

Marx is best known for his three-volume work entitled *Capital* (Ger. *Das Kapital*). There is no leading university in the world which does not teach Marx's theories of capitalism. Marx is regarded as one of the founders of modern sociology. He was a theorist of capitalist society. Much of his writing intended to elucidate the origins, nature and consequences of the capitalist mode of production.

Capitalism can be defined as a system whereby workers or labourers sell their labour to the owners of capital. Marx believed that this situation embodies an exploitative relationship between the owners of capital and the working classes which do not own capital. The exploitation is such that the full value of the workers' input in the production process is not returned to them in the form of their wages.

A central issue raised by Marx was the length of the working day. Wages are decided by the market in such a way that the number of hours worked creates an economic value which exceeds the wages paid by the capitalist to the worker. This surplus value is what allows capitalists to earn profits. This accumulation of surplus was defined by Marx as exploitation. Exploitation arises from the difference between the wages which are paid to workers and the actual value of the output of their labour.

Marx also discussed the alienation experienced by people living in a capitalist society. Technological developments caused workers to engage in work which was very interconnected and interdependent, and did not allow the possibility of achieving their full potential as creative and sensual beings. In a society like this, people are more connected to machines or computers than they are to their fellow human beings.

Exploitation and alienation are the two main ailments of modern capitalist society. According to Marx, the working class will eventually realise their conditions. They will understand the workings of the capitalist system. This means that they will understand their role in the creation of value, how wages are determined and that they are being exploited. Marx referred to this awareness as class consciousness. He believed that capitalism would eventually give way to a system which was more just, that is, socialism. In this respect, history has proven that Marx was wrong.

Nevertheless, Marx did have a great influence on capitalist society. Apart from his academic work, Marx was also active in the working class movement. He established the International Workingmen's Association in London in 1864. Marx can also be said to have been the source of inspiration for the idea of May Day or International Workers' Day which falls on 1 May throughout the world and is designated as an international holiday. The date of its

celebration is connected to Karl Marx. Many changes in the capitalist system occurred as a result of the pressure from Marxist thinkers and the working class movement which was influenced by Marx's ideas.

Although Marx's main concern was the exploitation of the working class, his understanding of capitalism can be expanded to include the critique of corrupt and kleptocratic governments. Kleptocracy refers to rule by theft. State officials misuse their position and power to accumulate capital and wealth. This wealth is used to increase their income and is part of the process of capital accumulation.

Exploitation, alienation and corruption are the main problems affecting most Muslim countries in the modern period. The ideas of Marx and other socialists have highlighted these problems. Syed Hussein Alatas demonstrates in this book that some of the concerns of socialists are not any different from the concerns of Muslim figures in the past. He urges Muslim societies to think deeply about socialist values and to put them into practice in order to achieve social justice.

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER*

The author of this work, Syed Hussein Alatas, is better known in our community as a sociologist who was once involved in politics, rather than as a scholar who devoted a lot of attention over the last 25 years to issues concerning Islam. From 1954-1955, while continuing his studies, he was the editor of a monthly journal, *Progressive Islam*, which was published in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Prof. Syed Hussein has written extensively on issues concerning Islam since 1950. These essays have been published in journals in Amsterdam, London, Cape Town, Lahore, Karachi, Cairo and Jakarta.

In our homeland, his essays were first published in 1957. Apart from writing for local publications, since 1960 Prof. Syed Hussein has published several scholarly essays in international journals. Many of his essays have been

* Translator's note: This refers to *Seruan Masa*, the publishers of the original 1976 edition of *Islam dan Sosialisme*.

published in French, Arabic and Japanese, besides those in English. These essays have been published in Belgium, England, America, Germany, France, Australia, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Japan. Scholars from abroad have started to pay more attention to Prof. Syed Hussein's contributions. Last year he was appointed as a member of the Advisory Committee of the Ninth World Congress of Sociology which will meet in Sweden in 1978, and also as a rapporteur for the congress. He was also appointed as a member of the editorial board of the international journal, *Current Sociology*.

Since 1963, Prof. Syed Hussein has been invited to give lectures in Egypt, America, Germany, Australia and most recently (1975), France. He has also been invited to present papers at several scholarly world congresses.

Prof. Syed Hussein is a Malaysian citizen, from Johor Bahru. From 1958 to 1960 he served as Senior Research Officer and Head of the Research Division at Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. After that he returned to Amsterdam to complete his doctoral dissertation at the University of Amsterdam, where he had earlier obtained his previous degrees, since becoming a student at the university. Upon his return in 1963, he worked as a lecturer and served as Head of the Cultural Division of the Department of Malay Studies at the University of Malaya. Since 1967, he has been working at the University of Singapore as Professor and

Head of the Department of Malay Studies. This year he gave part-time lectures at the Faculty of Islam at the National University of Malaysia (UKM).

From 1969-1971, Prof. Syed Hussein was appointed by the Malaysian government as a member of the National Consultative Council and played an active role in the development of the Rukun Negara and efforts to amend the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. In 1971, he became a senator at the Dewan Negara. In that year, he also withdrew from the party Gerakan due to disagreements about its principles and policies. He had been the national chairman of the party and one of its main founders.

Following that, his activities focused on intellectual issues. In 1972, he published his book *Siapa Yang Salah* (*Who is to Blame*), a response to the book *Revolusi Mental (Mental Revolution)*[*] as well as Dr Mahathir Mohamad's book, *The Malay Dilemma*. Recently, along with some of his friends, he has been working to establish a body whose purpose is to raise awareness and understanding about social justice. It is called Liga Reformasi (Reformation League). Efforts are underway to have it registered.

[*] Translator's note: For the English version see Senu Abdul Rahman et al., *Mental Revolution*, Pelanduk Publications, Selangor Darul Ehsan, 2004.

As for this work, the essence of his thought is not new. On 7 October 1959, *Utusan Melayu* carried Prof. Syed Hussein's essay, "Erti Kemajuan Masyarakat" ("The Meaning of Progress of Society") in which he stated that his philosophical orientation was socialism based on religion. The last few months have seen several publications that provide explanations on Islam, socialism and communism. The lack of knowledge of those who discuss these issues is obvious. Islam requires us to eradicate misunderstandings and ignorance and it is for this reason that we decided to publish this book for the benefit of society.

Islam and Socialism is the first broad-ranging and scientific essay about this issue written by a Malaysian. In 1956, Burhanuddin Al-Helmy wrote about the appropriateness of socialism in relation to Islam in a booklet entitled *Ke Arah Tanah Melayu Merdeka* (*Towards an Independent Malaya*). Since then, Muslim politicians have discussed this issue in the setting of debates between political parties, solely in popular publications. Their understanding generally lacks depth, either about Islam or socialism, or even both.

In this book, Professor Syed Hussein has made an important distinction between the general principles of socialism and certain socialist modes of thought, such as Marxism which is atheistic and anti-religion. The founder of Marxist thought, Karl Marx, wrote in 1844 that religion is

the opium of the masses. He said: "The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness."[1] His close comrade in struggle, Friedrich Engels, in his letter to Marx regarding Arabic stone inscriptions on 24 May 1853, referred to Islam as a false religion.[2]

Professor Syed Hussein has refuted Marx's dialectical materialism in many of his writings over the last 22 years. In every field there are people who do not believe in God and religion. This does not mean that everything in that particular field has to be rejected just because there are a few people who approach that field without God and religion. There are also those who are religious. It is wrong for socialism to be equated with Marxism. There are other strands of socialism, and Prof. Syed Hussein's arguments are very strong. He notes that the Federal Constitution of Malaysia is not wrong just because there are people who do not believe in God but uphold the constitution.

Apart from the above, this work by Prof. Syed Hussein is a result of the merging of Islamic principles with modern thought, from a scholar who truly understands the ideals of Islam and who is considered one of the leading scholars in Southeast Asia. His contributions to information on the

1 Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", in K. Marx, F. Engels, *On Religion*, p. 38.

2 Ibid., p. 107.

coming of Islam to Southeast Asia, published in Belgium in 1962, as well as about Islam and Max Weber, published in Paris in 1963, have garnered attention from scholars abroad.[3]

We hope that this book will open the doors to quality intellectual debate about our society. Once this book has achieved a wide reach, Prof. Syed Hussein plans to compile a book featuring debates about Islam and socialism. Some of our scholars will be invited to contribute their essays on this issue. We end this with the hope that readers will benefit from the contents of this book.

SERUAN MASA. Pulau Pinang, 24 Sept. 1976.

[3] See bibliography.

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

From Hurling the Sacred to Relearning Tradition and History

Recalling her experience of translating some 18th century Bengali poetry, Gayatri Spivak said that "translation is the most intimate act of reading. I surrender to the text when I translate."[1] Translation is not easy. It is not the mere process of finding the equivalent of a word in another language and stringing these words together, only to end up with a word-for-word translation. Instead, it requires a close reading of the original text. It requires the translator to understand the meaning and context of the original text, to understand the message that the author is trying to convey, to understand his or her reasons for writing what was written. While this might sound manageable, it is not always possible to

1 Gayatri Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, New York, 1993, p. 180.

understand why an author wrote something the way he or she did.

The Curious Case of the Room

Take for example, the following quote from *Islam and Socialism*:

> Apart from this there were also groups of Muslims who wanted to imitate the West in a manner that offended Muslims, as was done by Mustafa Kemal, the Turkish dictator after the First World War, who allegedly hurled the Qur'an in a room.[2]

When I decided to embark on this passion project of translating my grandfather's book, I had thought that I would have the most difficulty, and therefore frustration, in translating sentences that specifically had to do with theoretical explanations of socialism. Instead, the quote above is what evoked the strongest sense of frustration in me. More specifically, it was the very last part of the sentence that was the culprit. In his long preface to the book, Alatas explains that he will discuss the ideas propagated by some Muslim figures who were uncritically against Western civilization, and also provides a contrasting example of Muslim figures who were imitative of the West and who had pushed Islam "into the background."[3]

[2] See p. 19.
[3] Ibid.

I understood why he chose Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's hurling of the Qur'an as his example. But what I failed to understand was why he saw the need to mention that the Qur'an was hurled *in a room*. Would it have been insufficient to simply say that Atatürk had hurled the Qur'an, and end the sentence there? Why did he see the need to mention the room? Was there a particular significance to this room? Would it have made a difference to him if the Qur'an was hurled outside in a garden? No matter where it was hurled, and whether or not the location in which the hurling was committed is mentioned, the point is that the Qur'an was treated disrespectfully.

As you now might be able to understand, not knowing the answer to these questions was frustrating, and I obviously did not have the option of asking him why he wrote it that way. I also did not have the option of removing those last three words as that is not the translator's role. I therefore had to surrender to the text. Despite my surrender, however, I had to give meaning to the text and I decided to do some research about this particular event in history. Thankfully, I found an answer in a volume of the *Islamic Review*, a journal which my grandfather had referred to elsewhere in the book. In the Editorial of that volume, it was stated that the Qur'an was flung from "one corner of the room to the other." What a difference just a few words makes! Had my grandfather been alive, I certainly would have confronted him regarding this unsettling point about his unsuccessful

paraphrasing. Instead, I had to resort to providing this important information above in a mere footnote.[4]

Irrational Fears of Socialism

However, discussing my grandfather's unsuccessful paraphrasing is not the focus of this introduction. Instead, we should pay attention to the book itself. Originally published in Malay in 1976 as *Islam dan Sosialisma*, it was shortly after its republication in 2020 as *Islam dan Sosialisme* that the idea of having an English translation arose. Seeing the value of having an English version and consequently adding to global discussions on the relationship between Islam and socialism, I decided to take on the task of translating it. I must state, however, that while I did translate most of the book, there was already an existing original English version of the section titled "Islam and Socialism." I have therefore used that version in this book.[5]

In his preface, Alatas states his intention to provide a "scholarly explanation on Islam and socialism," so as to address the anti-socialist views which were prevalent in Malaysia at the time, and which often came from those

4 Ibid.

5 This English version was never published. It appears in Malay as the main body of the text in *Islam dan Sosialisme*. See Syed Hussein Alatas, "Islam dan Sosialisme", in *Islam dan Sosialisme*, Gerakbudaya, Petaling Jaya, 2020 [1976], pp. 61-91.

who were uninformed.[6] His main argument, as scholars before him have also argued, is that there are no inherent clashes between Islam and socialism because Islam is in fact socialist in nature. He supports his argument with examples of historical figures such as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his cousin and son-in-law, Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib, whose actions were guided by the principles of Islam, which are also the principles of socialism. Because of their overlapping principles, it is therefore possible to speak of Islamic socialism as a school of thought which is entirely based on Islamic principles, and not an ideology which intends to alter the pillars of Islam, as some critics claim.

Alatas therefore spends a considerable amount of time debunking criticisms of socialism. Apart from his sound explanations as to why certain criticisms or fears are irrational, one of the ways in which he tries to make his arguments clear is through his sarcastic and sometimes piercing sense of humour. For example, when he discusses the misinformed view that socialism in its entirety is in opposition to Islam because there are forms of socialism which are atheistic – and should therefore be avoided by Muslims – he suggests that we might as well stay away from cucumbers since they could be grown and harvested by atheists. This is just one of the few examples in the book which will cause one to pause and laugh, and maybe even wince like I did.

[6] See p. 1.

Cries Against the West

Having discussed the unfounded criticisms against socialism, he then discusses how they tend to exist alongside criticisms against Western civilization, which are also often made by those who are unenlightened about Western history and culture. It is here that he critiques Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Asad and Abul Hasan Nadvi, whose statements he said "distanced Muslims from progress."[7] He refers to these figures as "screamers" (tukang jerit)[8] whose voices have become hoarse as a result of all their biased and uncritical attacks against Western civilization. While they highlight the attributes of Western civilization which they perceive to be negative, they veil the positive attributes. By providing several quotes from their books, and even from other figures such as Abul Ala Maududi and Muhammad Qutb, Alatas illustrates how such sentiments are dangerous in that they impede the progress and development of Muslim societies around the world, when in fact, Western history and civilization are meaningful sources of knowledge for Muslims.

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7 See p. 18.

8 I had difficulty translating this phrase into English. The word "tukang" refers to someone who is skilled in a particular profession or craft, and "jerit" refers to the act of screaming or screeching. I therefore settled on "screamers," although I do not think it fully encapsulates what he meant by "tukang jerit", or people who specialise in vocally but uncritically attacking others.

Sources of Inspiration

Apart from his discussion of the above-mentioned individuals who were critical of the West and of socialism, Alatas also discusses Muslim figures who had a positive attitude towards socialism. More specifically, he takes inspiration from Haji Omar Said Tjokroaminoto, the foremost activist and nationalist leader of Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union, SI), which later became Partai Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union Party, PSI), the first political party in Indonesia. Tjokroaminoto himself published a monograph titled *Islam dan Sosialisme*, which was originally an address given at the Second Islamic Congress in Garut, Java in 1924. In this monograph, he too says that the principles of socialism were present in Muslim society during the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and he provides several examples of the organisation and functioning of Muslim society at the time to demonstrate how it was guided by socialist principles.[9]

However, Alatas highlights that even before Tjokroaminoto, another Muslim had already begun to discuss the relation between Islam and socialism. This was Shaikh Mushir Hosain Kidwai, a lawyer based in India who was also the Secretary of the Pan-Islamic Society of London. He was also a contributor to the *Islamic Review* journal.

[9] H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, *Islam dan Sosialisme*, Sega Arsy, Bandung, 2010.

While he wrote several publications on various topics in relation to Islam, his first book, published in 1912, was also titled *Islam and Socialism*. The epigraph of his book states that "To us (Musalmans), Socialism means an organised, continuous and harmonious co-operation of individuals in all the affairs of life whether industrial or economic, administrative or political, social or religious, with a view to securing universal well-being and general prosperity."[10] He too saw Islam as socialist in nature and proclaimed that "the idea of Socialism in Islam is not less than thirteen centuries old..."[11] Muslims living in the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were already practicing socialist principles.

By way of introduction, Kidwai states that there are two aspects of socialism, which are state socialism and industrial socialism. He said that if the state was socialist, then the industry would also be socialist since land is the "root of all production and an object of great industry..."[12] In his view, it was these two aspects of socialism which were put into practice at the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In order to demonstrate how these aspects of socialism were present in early Muslim society, as well as how the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself was guided

10 Shaikh Mushir Hosain Kidwai, *Islam and Socialism*, Luzac & Co., London, 1912, copyright page.

11 Ibid., p. ii.

12 Ibid.

by the spirit of socialism, Kidwai provides numerous quotes from the Qur'an and hadith which illustrate the socialist essence of Islam. Spread across ten chapters, he examines the different precepts, practices, laws and beliefs in Islam and early Muslim society and sheds light on their socialist nature and objectives.

Apart from Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), he also recounts stories of the first four caliphs (Abu Bakar, Umar, Uthman and Ali) and how their actions and the laws they implemented were socialist in nature. Even when he discusses the expansion of the Muslim empire from the time of the Rashidun Caliphate, he addresses its "Socialistic constitution."[13] Because of its socialist spirit, the government introduced several policies to ensure the general wellbeing of the people. For example, free education was provided. Additionally, the treasury (Baytul Mal) was public property, and the more fortunate were expected to help the poor. Furthermore, those in power did not receive high salaries, and were also required to accept the criticisms of their people.[14]

Ultimately for Kidwai, socialism was a response to individualism, and would take root when an individual started to realise that everyone in society was equal and that no one individual should be accorded special treatment.

[13] Ibid., p. 44

[14] Ibid., pp. 45-48.

In this type of society, every individual would look out for one another, and it is this idea of a collective spirit which is a central teaching of Islam. Thus, the foundation of Islamic socialism is religion, and therefore "Socialism and religion must be considered inseparable."[15]

As Alatas did many years later, Kidwai reminds Muslims that it is their responsibility to learn from all civilizations. In his last chapter on "Warnings and Suggestions to Musalmans," he reiterates that the Qur'an calls upon Muslims to not only act as an intermediary to unite the East and the West, but that Muslims should also shape a "model civilization comprising of all that is useful in the West and all that is good in the East."[16] However, while learning from the West, he reminds Muslims to return to the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his disciples so that they can relearn the principles of socialism, which they should not look to Europe for. Kidwai finally concludes by saying that socialism is the way to achieving the "ultimate goal" of Pan-Islamism.[17]

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15 Ibid., p. 52.

16 Ibid., p. 74.

17 Ibid., p. 80. What might be interesting for readers is that Kidwai's *Islam and Socialism* received such good reviews to the extent that he was "persuaded to write" a complementary book on Pan-Islamism and Bolshevism. Almost 500 pages long, the book discusses the origins and objectives of Bolshevism, its similarities and differences with Pan-Islamism, among other things. His stand is summarised as follows: "The chief aims of Bolshevism are so grand, they are so

In his discussion on Kidwai, Alatas does state that "apparently, his writings had some influence on Tjokroaminoto."[18] Although not as much as before, I once again felt frustrated, because there was no explanation as to how Tjokroaminoto might have been influenced by Kidwai, or where Alatas got this perception from. Perhaps he was not aware of the details of this influence, especially since he does state that he was not able to read Kidwai's book. Nevertheless, he was right. Indeed, if one were to take a look at both Kidwai's and Tjokroaminoto's books, one would notice that the latter is almost a direct translation of the former.

In fact, Kidwai's influence on Tjokroaminoto has been addressed in an article by Kevin Fogg, in which the author discusses the intellectual origins of Islamic socialism in Indonesia.[19] Contributing to a discussion on how South

highly humanitarian, they are so similar to Islam that every Muslim would like to see them flourishing all over the world in such a way so as to become beneficial for all peoples, all races and all countries." He thought that if the very small disagreements between Bolshevism and Pan-Islamism could be addressed, the two would be a "blessing for the world." See Kidwai, *Pan-Islamism and Bolshevism*, Luzac & Co., London, 1937.

[18] See p. 78-79.

[19] Prior to Fogg's article, it seems that only Jusuf Wibisono acknowledged that Tjokroaminoto was influenced by Kidwai, but not that the former directly translated from the latter. Perhaps Alatas might have read Wibisono's book. See Jusuf Wibisono, *Islam dan Sosialisme*, Volumes 1-2, Penerbit Sinar Ilmu, Djakarta, 1950.

Asia represented an "alternative current" of intellectual influence on Indonesia, beyond the "normative influence" of the Middle East, Fogg discusses Kidwai's influence on Tjokroaminoto and suggests that he plagiarised Kidwai.[20] He illustrates how both publications are highly similar, in that most of Tjokroaminoto's chapters seem to be a direct translation of Kidwai's book, although it is peppered with some original writing.[21] While plagiarism in scholarship is regarded as academic dishonesty, one could wonder if it was Tjokroaminoto's intention to be dishonest and to pass off Kidwai's work as his own. In fact, Fogg highlights that it was common for Indonesian writers to copy heavily from foreign sources.[22] Furthermore, he goes on to demonstrate how Tjokroaminoto had long been influenced by South Asian ideas, and this was most likely primarily a result of his interactions with the Ahmadiyyah community and their wider historical role in republishing South Asian material and translating it into Indonesian.[23] Nevertheless, whether or not one chooses to call it plagiarism, Tjokroaminoto's book had a deep and lasting impact on the discourse on Islamic socialism in Indonesia, and even in colonial Malaya.

[20] Kevin W. Fogg, 'Indonesian Islamic Socialism and its South Asian Roots', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 53, no. 6, 2019, pp. 1736-1761: p. 1745.

[21] Ibid., pp. 1745-1746.

[22] Ibid., p. 1747.

[23] Ibid., p. 1750.

Marxism: To Reject or to Accept?

In his preface to his book, (which was his original contribution) titled "Pengertian Sosialisme" ("The Meaning of Socialism"), Tjokroaminoto states that Muslims cannot accept Marxism because it is built upon materialism. He explains that because the Marxist conception of historical materialism teaches that everything originates from and returns to matter or the material, it ultimately worships the material and denies the existence of God.[24] Similarly, Alatas also clearly states in his book that atheistic aspects of certain strands of socialism, such as Marxism, are incompatible with Islam. However, he took the view that not all aspects of dialectical materialism were in opposition to Islam, but that some aspects were in fact valid.[25] Indeed, for Alatas, there were aspects of Marxism which he found to be insightful and applied them in his research.

This is evident in his book *The Myth of the Lazy Native*. In this book, Alatas discusses the image of the indolent Malays, Javanese, and Filipinos as a component of the ideology of colonial capitalism, and how it functioned to justify colonial rule by the British, Dutch and Spaniards. In discussing the dominance of this ideology in relation to labour, Alatas said that a joint work of Marx and Engels "provided an important clue to the understanding of

[24] Tjokroaminoto, *Islam dan Sosialisme*, pp. 35-36.

[25] See pp. 10-11.

history," which he found to be relevant to the topic at hand.[26] More specifically, this had to do with their outlook of historical materialism, which posited that the ruling class of a given society would have dominance over the generation and dissemination of ideas in that society. In the words of Marx and Engels, "their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch."[27] Following this approach of understanding society and history, Alatas illustrated how colonial capitalism – as the dominant ideology of the ruling class in the 19th and early 20th centuries – became the dominant ideology which conditioned how the ruling class understood labour and indolence in the colonies.

However, while Alatas demonstrates his selective acceptance of Marxism in the form of his adoption of historical materialism, he does criticise those Muslims who accepted Marxism in its entirety, even if it was in conflict with basic Islamic precepts. Datuk Ibrahim Tan Malaka, who was the leader of the Indonesian communist movement, is one such example. Alatas discusses Tan Malaka in his book *Kita Dengan Islam* (*Islam and Us*), which is a collection of essays on Islam and the development of Muslim society. In this book he included an essay titled "Jenis Manusia Baru Dalam Masyarakat Islam" ("New Types

[26] Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, Frank Cass, London, 1977, p. 83.

[27] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 39, ed. R. Pascal. Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1938, quoted in Alatas, ibid.

of Humans in Muslim Society") in which he states that there are five types of humans in Muslim society. The first type, which he says he has already discussed in *Islam and Socialism*, are the screamers whose "climate of thought is followed by dark clouds from the past."[28] The second type, as exemplified by Sukarno, the first president of Indonesia, included those who believed in Islam but did not have faith in Muslim leaders to guide Muslims towards progress, and therefore distanced themselves from the efforts of these leaders.[29] The third type, as exemplified by Sutan Syahrir, the first prime minister of Indonesia, included those who were Muslim but who did not play any role in the development of Muslim society and who did not think about the role of Islam in society.[30]

It is the fourth human type which Alatas spends a considerable amount of time on. This fourth type are those who have left Islam and encourage others to do the same.[31] Alatas uses Tan Malaka as an example, stating that although he had left Islam, did not hate the religion and still wrote about it, he did have erroneous views about Islam.[32] Alatas discusses Tan Malaka's views on topics such as the oneness

28 Syed Hussein Alatas, *Kita Dengan Islam: Tumbuh Tiada Berbuah*, Pustaka Nasional, Singapore, 1979, p. 107.

29 Ibid., p. 109.

30 Ibid., p. 112.

31 Ibid., p. 142.

32 Ibid., p. 126.

of God, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), God's creations, revelation, the human soul, morality and so on, and illustrates how his ideas are in line with those of Marxism, specifically its atheistic dimension.[33] Alatas therefore criticises him for misusing Islam and wanting to eradicate it in the name of spreading communism. He finally concludes that while there are various Marxist ideas which are useful for Muslims and Muslim society, such as those concerning false consciousness and the role of capitalism, it does not mean that Muslims should accept all of Marxism as Tan Malaka had done.[34] This is because of the atheistic dimension of its philosophy, as well as its ideas on morality, ethics and relativism.

Dr M's Misleading Views on Socialism and Communism

However, Tan Malaka is not the only individual whom Alatas criticises in relation to Islam and socialism, or Marxism and communism, for that matter. Towards the end of his book, Alatas dedicates an entire section to questioning and criticising Mahathir Mohamad. He focuses on Mahathir's criticisms of socialism, communism and Western civilization in general. He even titled the section "Dr Mahathir Once Again," as if to say that this was not the first time that he had to engage with Mahathir's

[33] Ibid., pp. 133-140.

[34] Ibid., p. 140.

(problematic) comments. A reader who is familiar with Alatas' works would know that this is certainly the case. Prior to the publication of *Islam and Socialism* in 1976, Alatas published *Siapa Yang Salah* in 1972. This book, which focuses on the general theme of the development of Malay society, examines how the Malay political elite perpetuated negative colonial-era stereotypes about the Malays. In doing so, Alatas directs his criticism towards *Revolusi Mental*, a collective work published by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in 1971 which aimed to present UMNO's views on the attitudes of the Malays and the problems afflicting Malay society.

While the main text of the book discusses *Revolusi Mental*, in his preface he briefly discusses Mahathir's views on the Malays, as expressed in his book, *The Malay Dilemma*, which also discusses the problems affecting Malay development. In criticising Mahathir's views on Malay backwardness, Alatas says that Mahathir had "belittled Malays more than *Revolusi Mental* and the British colonisers had."[35] He scrutinises several of Mahathir's views and demonstrates how they only serve to perpetuate problematic and unscientific views of the Malays. At the end of his preface, he invites Mahathir to have a discussion with him in the press, so as to allow for a clearer explanation of his writing.

[35] Syed Hussein Alatas, *Siapa Yang Salah: Sekitar Revolusi Mental dan Peribadi Melayu*, Pustaka Nasional, Singapore, 1974, p. 9.

Four years later, Alatas feels the need to return to a discussion on Mahathir's ideas. In his aptly titled last chapter of *Islam and Socialism*, he says that Mahathir has yet to respond to his invitation, and states that he sees the need to discuss his writings once again. This time, he focuses on Mahathir's book, *Menghadapi Cabaran* (*The Challenge*), which was published in 1976. The back cover blurb of the English translation of the book proclaims that Mahathir "explodes fallacies and exposes distortions concerning Islam, communism, freedom and discipline, and the concerns of this world and the next."[36] What exactly are the distortions that he explosively exposes? What exactly does he say about communism?

As will be evident in Alatas' discussion later on, it seems that Mahathir was guilty of further distortions. In his chapter on "The Malays and Communist Influence," Mahathir expresses his doubt that the Malays will remain Muslim in the face of perceived pressure from the communists to encourage them to join the cause. However, he explains that because the communists eventually realised that the Malays would not easily forsake their religion, they changed their tactics and decided to sow division among the Malays instead. In order to do so, Mahathir states, they operated under the guise of socialism which allegedly holds

[36] Mahathir Mohamad, *The Challenge*, Pelanduk Publications, Selangor, 1986, back cover.

the view that workers and the poor "must be enemies of the rich and strive to abolish individual possession of wealth through seizure by the Government."[37] Consequently, the socialists "inflame emotions by drawing attention to the hardship suffered by the poor and contrasting it with the affluence of the rich," eventually resulting in the acceptance of socialism and the downfall of Islamic principles regarding the social order.[38] He further says that according to socialism, "conflict between classes need not stem from oppression but is purely ideological" since the poor are expected to be enemies with the rich even if they are not the oppressors.[39] This therefore causes a "rift in Islamic solidarity" as Muslims are led to oppose the government who "can be accused of collaborating with the rich."[40] Mahathir thus concludes that any opposition or criticism against the government only serves to help the communists.

Were Mahathir's views on socialism and the relationship between the Malays and the government accurate? Alatas did not think so, and illustrated how Mahathir's statements in fact actually served to support the communists. By preventing people from criticising their government, the government would remain weak and susceptible to the influence of its enemies, such as the communists. In fact,

37 Ibid., p. 87.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

Alatas demonstrates how the Malays' expression of their dissatisfaction with the government is actually encouraged in Islam, and that it is the duty of Muslims to voice their grievances and criticise those in power for the purpose of improving the situation. A government should be criticised if it is not acting as it should, and a country's citizens should not be accused of committing wrongdoings simply because they openly and honestly criticise the government. Alatas therefore dismisses Mahathir's idea that the Malays should not criticise their government, and instead says that the only way to defeat the communist influence is by ridding the government of corrupt and incapable leaders.

Socialism and the Malay Left in Late Colonial and Early Independence Malay(si)a

One could then ask, were there Malays (and even non-Malays) who were involved in socialist or communist movements? The answer is a definite yes. This book should be read with that background in mind, as it contributes to an ongoing discourse about socialism and Islam which had already been present since at least the 1950s. However, this is not to say that socialist ideas were not already present before then. For example, in his study on the origins of the Malay Left, Rustam Sani points out that while one could not conclude that the entire Malay Left was united by the socialist ideology, he does illustrate how organisations such as the Kesatuan Melayu Muda (Young Malays Association,

KMM), established in 1938, "were more tolerant of socialist ideas and influences."[41]

There was also the Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (Awakened Youth Movement, API) which was established in 1946 by Ahmad Boestamam. It was formed during a rally organised by the Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (Malay Nationalist Party of Malaya, PKMM), and served as the party's radical militant wing.[42] *Testament Politik API*, the political manifesto of API, shows how Boestamam led API with socialist ideals.[43] Later on, organisations such as Fron Sosialis Rakyat Malaya (Malayan People's Socialist Front, SF), founded in 1957 with the coming together of Parti Rakyat (People's Party, PRM) and Parti Buruh (Labour

41 Rustam Sani, *The Social Roots of the Malay Left: An Analysis of the Kesatuan Melayu Muda*, Petaling Jaya: SIRD, 2008, p. 8.

42 It also had a women's wing, Angkatan Wanita Sedar (Conscious Women's Movement, AWAS). PKMM, API, AWAS and others were part of Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (Centre for People's Power, PUTERA), a coalition consisting of several Malay leftist organisations, which in 1947 joined forces with the All-Malaya Council for Joint Action (AMCJA) to form the PUTERA-AMCJA, a multiracial coalition which led the first Malaya-wide hartal on 20 October 1947 to protest against British colonialism. It must be noted that the groups mentioned here are not exhaustive. For more information on the hartal and names of more Malay and non-Malay leftist groups, see Fahmi Reza's documentary, *10 Tahun Sebelum Merdeka*.

43 Ahmad Boestamam, *Testament Politik API*, L.T. A.P.I. Malaya, 1946. For further reading on Boestamam's socialist ideals, see Teo Lee Ken, "Liberational Justice in the Political Thought of Ahmad Boestamam", *Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2018, pp. 65-84.

Party, PBM), were more obviously socialist. The PRM was later reformed and became Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Socialist Party, PSRM) in 1968, and Kassim Ahmad served as its chairman for 18 years.[44] Even before his involvement in the party, he was active in the University Socialist Club while still a student at Universiti Malaya, where he already started to promote his socialist ideas.[45]

However, it is only with the emergence of Dr Burhanuddin Al-Helmy that the discourse on socialism in relation to Islam started to gain ground. Known for his radical nationalist and Islamist ideas, Dr Burhanuddin propagated his philosophy of non-communal nationalism which was built upon the foundations of Islam and its emphasis on social justice and equality. While he promulgated these ideas since the founding of the PKMM in 1945,[46] it was when he became the third president of Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party,

44 He was already a part of the PRM in 1960.

45 For more information on Kassim Ahmad's involvement in politics and his initial passion for socialism, see his memoir, Kassim Ahmad, *The Road Home: From Socialism to Islam*, ZI Publications, Petaling Jaya, 2011.

46 Dr Burhanuddin formed the party together with other prominent Malay leftists such as Mokhtaruddin Lasso, Ahmad Boestamam and Ishak Haji Muhammad. He served as president from 1946 to 1947. Later on in 1955 he was involved in the formation of the PRM which mainly consisted of working-class Malays, and which was led by Boestamam.

PAS) in 1956 that his ideas gained more grounding. Upon taking over the presidency of PAS, Dr Burhanuddin stated his political ideology and his vision for the party. One important aspect of his political ideology was the coming together of nationalism, Islamism and socialism, which he elaborated upon during his acceptance speech:

> They are not separable from one another but are in fact related to one another … In nationalism we find the element of socialism because nationalism in its fundamental interpretation is based on consciousness and the aspiration to build a just society … In socialism one finds elements of nationalism because socialism by itself cannot be built unless it is pioneered by a nationalist spirit to blaze the path towards freedom and away from the yoke of colonialism. The building of socialism can be regarded as the final extension of these developments … In a way elements of nationalism are also found in Islamism, as it is vital to base the national liberation movement on the high principles of Islamism. The common factor in these three forces is their fundamental anticolonial stand; their common objective being the need to build a free, democratic and sovereign nation. As such, these forces should necessarily work side by side, mutually strengthening

one another.[47]

Dr Burhanuddin therefore saw value in socialism and thought that it could work hand in hand with nationalism and Islamism to craft the future of independent Malaya.[48] Ultimately, he believed that the universal ideals of Islam would transcend communalism and defeat colonialism so as to achieve an independent and sovereign nation. As with many members of the Malay Left, his interest in socialism was influenced by political developments in Indonesia and his admiration for Sukarno.[49]

Socialism as an Antidote to the Problems in Developing Societies

In today's world, especially in America, socialism has become a dirty word, just as Marxism and communism are. All these words or ideologies have been grossly misunderstood and vilified to the advantage of certain

47 *PAS dalam Arus Perjuangan Kemerdekaan*, Panel Pengkaji Sejarah, Pusat Penyelidikan PAS, Angkatan Edaran, Selangor, 1999, pp. 76-77, translated by and quoted in Farish Noor, *Islam Embedded: The Historical Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party PAS (1951-2003)* Vol. 1, Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, Kuala Lumpur, 2004, pp. 126-127.

48 For more information on Dr Burhanuddin's ideas and demands which were guided by socialist and Islamic principles, see Farish Noor's book.

49 He even secretly joined Sukarno's Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Party, PNI) and Tjokroaminoto's Sarekat Islam. Farish Noor, ibid., p.106.

segments of society, and such negative perceptions have undoubtedly spread to other parts of the world, including Malaysia. Today, the only socialist party still around in Malaysia is Parti Sosialis Malaysia (Socialist Party of Malaysia, PSM), which was formed in 1998. While socialist ideas continue to get drowned out by the mainstream and the forces of capitalism, PSM continues to conduct its grassroots activities and holds its annual Socialism Forum, which was first held in 2005. Beyond that, some political analysts have suggested that socialist values are gaining popularity in Malaysia, and this is largely a result of the increasing disgruntlement that Malaysians have with their leaders for not addressing the dire socio-economic and even political issues which continue to plague the country.

Hence, *Islam and Socialism* continues to be relevant today. By reading Alatas' witty yet insightful and sharp discussion on the topic, any reader will be able to glean important lessons about the enduring relevance of socialism and the need for the inculcation of socialist principles in every aspect possible.[50] Furthermore, the argument that Islam is socialist in nature is all the more crucial for Malaysia as it appears that the criticisms which Alatas made

[50] For further discussion on the relevance of the book, see Teo Lee Ken, "Alur Damai Islam dan Sosialisme", *Svara*, Issue 4, October-December 2020, pp. 16-18. See also Norshahril Saat, "Syed Hussein Alatas. Islam dan Sosialisme. Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Gerakbudaya Enterprise 2020", *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Volume 49, Issue 1, 2021, p. 119.

against the political and religious elite 45 years ago are still applicable today. In a context where those in positions of authority continue to perpetuate narrow-minded, exclusivist and discriminatory ideas and practices, it is critical that the socialist values which form the foundation of Islam are rediscovered and relearned so as to contribute to the development of a more inclusive, open-minded, and equitable society. The sacred needs to be reclaimed.

Alatas dedicated his life to observing and discussing the pressing issues which affected developing societies. These issues included corruption, poverty, poor political leadership and exclusivist religious ideologies. He argued that the root of many of these problems was the captive mind, or the "uncritical and imitative mind dominated by an external source, whose thinking is deflected from an independent perspective."[51] Consequently, in order to address these problems, the solution would be to develop a creative mind. In contrast to the captive mind, the creative mind would allow for a stronger and cleaner leadership, the development of broad-minded and critical thinking, the implementation of more equitable socio-economic policies and a greater sense of justice and cohesion in society. Put differently, the creative mind would lead to the flourishing of socialism and vice versa. This was probably why Alatas felt the need

[51] Syed Hussein Alatas, "The Captive Mind and Creative Development", *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1974, pp. 691-700: p. 692.

to write an entire book about socialism. His approach towards socialism informed his ideas about the problems of developing societies such as that of Malaysia, and he therefore saw socialism as an antidote to these problems.

If the creative mind and the values of socialism were to thrive in developing societies or the global south, it would allow for the growth and development of what Alatas termed an "autonomous social science tradition." Simply put, this refers to the linking of social science research and thinking to problems found in our own societies and communities.[52] This meant that there should be a recognition of specific problems within our own context, which should be addressed with a "distinctive combination of disciplines and composite background knowledge."[53] However, as Alatas also explains in the following pages, this does not necessarily mean that the West should be ignored. While an autonomous Asian social science tradition should still pay attention to knowledge developed in the rest of the world, the key is to pick out the significant, without falling captive to the trivial. With his founding of the Department of Malay Studies at the National University of Singapore (NUS) in 1967, and his efforts to craft an alternative approach towards studying the Malay world which has

[52] Syed Hussein Alatas, "The Development of an Autonomous Social Science Tradition in Asia: Problems and Prospects", *Asian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2002, pp. 150-157: p. 151.

[53] Ibid., p. 156.

continued to be the foundation of the department's pedagogy, Alatas' idea of an autonomous social science tradition eventually led to what is now known as the School of Autonomous Knowledge.[54] It is this spirit of inquiry and knowledge production which I hope will inform the reader's understanding of *Islam and Socialism*.

[54] Syed Imad Alatas, "Thoughts of the Late Syed Hussein Alatas", *Free Malaysia Today*, January 7, 2021, https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/highlight/2021/01/07/thoughts-of-the-late-syed-hussein-alatas/.

PREFACE

This work should be preceded by some remarks. There are some parts of the work which may not be clear enough to our readers. This work was initially written for a journal in Rome, Italy.* I was invited by the journal to submit a contribution on Islam and socialism which will be published in Italian. It was submitted last year.

Following that, anti-socialist views were being expressed in our country without a deep understanding as to what socialism really is. Those who expressed these views were not experts in political science or philosophy. In order to clear this murky state of thought, it was felt that a scholarly explanation on Islam and socialism should be developed. This book is an attempt in that direction.

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* Translator's note: The section that follows, "Islam and Socialism", appeared in Italian as "Islam e Socialismo", *Ulisse*, vol. XIV, 1977, pp. 103-113.

I began thinking about Islam and socialism more than 20 years ago, although such thoughts have existed in the Muslim world for over a century. In fact, every continuation of thought which occurs later adds to our observations of the problem that is being examined. It is hoped that we will have a deeper understanding of Islam and socialism, free from views influenced by irrationality and ignorance of the role of socialism in the history of the contemporary world.

In my opinion, and this is also the opinion of Syed Jamaluddin Afghani, Haji Omar Said Tjokroaminoto and others, socialism has always existed in Islam. It is right to consider Islam as a system which is socialist in nature. There are no clashes between Islam and socialism. What does exist are clashes between Islam and some types of socialism, such as Marxism, and not a clash between Islam and socialism in general.

A very similar example of this relationship comes from the renowned Leo Tolstoy, the Russian aristocrat and writer. Tolstoy's socialism was based on belief in God. There are also many obvious conflicts between Islam and some types of capitalism. There are understandings of capitalism which are not founded on belief in God. Nevertheless, the Muslim world today operates based on a capitalist system even though there are strands of capitalism which are atheistic and do not place importance on religion.

For some reason, Muslims who are anti-socialist like to point out that there are strands of socialism that are atheistic, but they are silent when it comes to forms of capitalism which are also atheistic. They are supporters of capitalism. What is exaggerated is the presence of irreligious people among the followers of socialism, and not among the followers of capitalism.

Then there are some Muslims who say that Islam cannot be equated with socialism or any other -isms. This objection does not make sense and is based on misunderstandings and ignorance. If we say that Islam is a religion, we are only categorising Islam as a system of beliefs and practices, which are referred to as religion. This does not mean that we consider Islam to be the same as other religions.

Likewise, when we say that Islam is socialist, it does not mean that Islam is compatible with every strand of socialism. The meaning of the phrase "Islam is socialist in nature" merely acts as a categorisation into a particular system of society based on the features that characterise it as socialist. Those who are against Islam being considered as socialist either do not understand the meaning of certain words or want to uphold the current capitalist system.

Saying that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a member of the Quraish tribe does not diminish the fact that he was a Muslim and a prophet. In this case we are simply categorising Prophet Muhammad (peace be

upon him) as a member of a community of people who have certain features. The question here is whether the categorisation is correct. In the case of the categorisation of Islam as a system which is socialist in nature, this is correct and accurate. As for the features of socialism:

1. Socialism places heavy emphasis on the needs of human life and the means of production. These means of production, and efforts to organise them for areas which are important for livelihood, should be controlled and owned by the state or cooperatives, and not by individual capitalists.

2. This ownership and control by the state or cooperatives is to prevent any exploitation of workers and consumers so that the prices of goods are not deliberately raised and the quality of goods are not deliberately reduced.

3. The state has to actively formulate and implement laws so that the production and distribution of goods is done fairly and equitably.

4. Socialism posits that one's surrounding conditions determine the nature of an individual and the emergence of social problems. If humanity lives in a state of deprivation, it will not progress.

5. Socialism posits that society is influenced by classes with specific interests. The dominant class forces its agenda on the people. The dominant class decides the

law and brings to life a belief system which protects their own and not the public interest.

6. Socialism aims to eradicate the injustices that arise from the capitalist system which is the opposite of socialism. In capitalist countries, logging companies, mining, rice milling, housing and others are all privately owned. In socialism, companies that can be maintained by the state and which are much-needed by the public are managed by the state or cooperatives.

7. Socialism posits that every member of society who is healthy and of age should work. In society nobody should be unemployed and rely on funds from the state or other members of society.

8. Socialism posits that all the spheres of society such as the cultural, the social, the religious, the educational spheres and so on should be such that they do not prevent but promote economic growth, scientific knowledge, justice, health and life satisfaction in general.

9. In considering an issue, socialism advocates for the majority and the disadvantaged based on the principles of justice. If a government is driven by the spirit of socialism it will place emphasis on raising the salaries of the lower-income rather than the higher-income workers.

10. Socialism employs science as far as possible in the formulation of problems, in the understanding of history and in the construction of a belief system.

There are many other features of socialism which can be discussed. But the features discussed above are sufficient. As explained, there are strands of socialism that are atheistic, such as Marxism, for example. Marxist teachings which deny belief in God are indeed incompatible with Islam. In our country I am the one who has most strongly opposed Marxism in terms of its philosophical background, namely dialectical materialism.[1]

Despite the views of such socialists about the question of God and the role of religion, it does not mean that socialism is wrong in its entirety, especially the type of socialism that respects religion, such as the socialism practiced by Tolstoy, Gandhi, Jayaprakash Narayan, Iqbal and others. The same applies to views of democracy. This system is not wrong just

[1] I have written about this issue for more than 20 years. Refer to my essays "Keadilan Sosial dalam Islam", *Daulah Islamiyah*, vols. 9 and 11, Sept. and Nov. 1957, Jakarta; *Islam dan Masyarakat*, Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1960; *The Democracy of Islam*, van Hoeve, the Hague, 1956; "Objectivity and the Writing of History", *Islamic Review*, vol. XLII, no. 1, London, 1954; "Masyarakat dan Perseorangan dalam Islam", *Berita Harian*, 21, 23, 27, 28, 29 July, 1959; and "Absolutizem dan Relativizem dalam Islam", *Chermin*, vol. 3, nos. 49, 50, 51, December 4, 11, 18, 1967 (Singapore). See also my essays in the monthly journal *Progressive Islam*, 1954-1955, published in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, under my leadership.

because some of its believers do not believe in God. If this is used as a benchmark for our whole lives, we would be wrong and in opposition to Islam. We should then avoid medical knowledge because there are doctors who do not believe in God. Cucumbers would not be good because there are those who plant it who do not believe in God. Finally, we should not use roads because there are people who do not believe in God who ride their bicycles on it.

Such are the consequences of anti-socialist thinking that is based on the existence of people who do not believe in God and who embrace socialism. The Federal Constitution of Malaysia is not wrong just because there are Malaysian citizens who do not believe in God but who uphold it.

A very strong view against socialism has been expressed in a recent statement by Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS).

Their understanding of socialism is very narrow. The same applies to their teachings of Islam which are supposedly anti-socialist.[2] In fact, what is debated is Marxism. According to this statement, Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) are figures of socialism. This opinion is clearly misleading. This is actually a communist and Marxist opinion. In European history, the words "socialism" and "socialist" were first used in Italy in 1803, 15 years before Karl Marx was born. In 1827, when

2 See *Al Islam*, 15 April, 1976, "Teori Sosialis tak diterima oleh Islam".

Marx was just nine years old, Robert Owen's followers in England used the word to refer to themselves. Following that, the use of the words "socialism" and "socialist" became more widespread. Historians agree that socialism in Europe began before the French Revolution in 1789.[3]

Whoever the figures of socialism in the West are, for us Muslims, our figure of socialism is the noble Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). A Muslim party* like Tjokroaminoto's party would acknowledge that socialism already exists in Islam, and neither opposes it nor implies deviation from Islamic tradition. The existence of socialists who do not believe in God does not mean that we must reject the general ideas of socialism, especially its principles which are compatible with Islam, not to mention socialism that is based on the belief in God. There are many people who like to eat rice who do not believe in God. Should we be anti-rice?

The statement by PAS acknowledges a similarity between Islam and what they consider to be socialism, but this similarity, they say, is the same as a similarity between beef and pork: the first is permissible and the second is not.[4] That is how PAS assesses the relationship between Islam and socialism, with the analogy of beef and pork.

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3 G.D.H. Cole, *Socialist Thought*, vol. 1, p. 1. Macmillan, London, 1955.

* Translator's note: Sarekat Islam.

4 *Al Islam*, 15 April, 1976, p. 5.

This analogy is not appropriate. Why not use mutton, horse meat, deer meat, buffalo meat and camel meat as analogous to permissible strands of socialism? Why is their thinking limited to pork, as if there are only two types of meat?

In fact, the example of beef and pork strengthens my opinion that Islam is socialist in nature. Both beef and pork are meat. Only one is permissible and the other is not. Islamic socialism is permissible and socialism which is atheistic is not. But both belong to a group of social systems referred to as socialism, the same way both Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his arch-enemy Abu Jahal are part of God's creation of human beings. It should not be that just because Abu Jahal was an unbeliever and anti-Islam, that we would be advised by PAS not to consider Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a human being. Because there are groups of socialists who are anti-religion, therefore Islam cannot be regarded as socialist.

As a result of the limited knowledge of some Muslim writers about philosophy and the true meaning of Islam, they are unable to fairly judge some important issues. Their writings on socialism are mainly based on misunderstandings. They attack socialism ostensibly because of its materialist outlook. What they mean by materialism is the view of socialism that the conditions of life of a particular group, a particular period, particular thoughts or certain qualities, are influenced or caused by economic

conditions or the mode of earning a living. This view is not contrary to Islam, as long as the belief in God is not set aside. Even before the socialists in Europe advanced this view, this awareness had already arisen among Muslims.

For example, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) has explained how Ibn Sina's and Al-Farabi's respective beliefs in alchemy were determined by their respective economic conditions. According to alchemists, gold can be made from metals other than gold. This secret was pursued by many people for hundreds of years. Not even one succeeded. Ibn Sina did not believe that it was possible. The reason, said Ibn Khaldun, was because Ibn Sina was rich. He was not after gold. On the other hand, Al-Farabi believed in alchemy. The reason, said Ibn Khaldun, was because Al-Farabi was poor and was unsuccessful in earning a living.[5]

The idea that the economic aspect and other aspects of society can determine human beliefs about various issues is not contrary to religion as long as religion and revelation are not sidelined. It is clear that if a person, such as Karl Marx, does not believe in religion, they will find a reason as to why religion arises, apart from revelation. As I explained earlier, there are such people among the supporters of capitalism as well.

[5] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3, p. 280. Tr. F. Rosenthal. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1958.

As I explained earlier, it is wrong for us to assume that socialism only refers to the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx. Apart from that, in our discussion on the differences between philosophy and dialectical materialism, let us not forget that what is denied is not the whole outlook of dialectical materialism, but only certain elements, such as the origins and role of religion, the dictatorship of the proletariat, class struggle as historical law, moral relativism and so on. The view of dialectical materialism on the role of ideology, the role of false consciousness, the evils of colonialism, all contain a lot of truth. I will not discuss these issues here because they require special attention.

What is contrary to Islam is the conception of materialism which has wrongly been interpreted as referring to material needs. It would be more accurate to refer to that materialism as the idea of material origins* and not material needs. Islam also places great importance on material needs. Sayyidina Ali ibn Abi Talib (602–661) in his advice to Kumail ibn Ziyad said that "poverty is the worst form of death."[6] Islam urges that human beings have just enough of the material needs that they need to live by. In his letter to Malik al-Ashtar, whom he appointed as governor of Egypt, Sayyidina

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* Translator's note: Materialism in this sense refers to the view that matter is the fundamental substance in nature and that everything in existence is ultimately material.

6 *Nahjul Balaqha*, section 3, no. 160, p. 549. Tr. Syed Mohd. Askari Jafery. Nahjul Balaqha Publication Committee, Poona, 1967.

Ali urged for the eradication of corruption and oppression. Likewise, the poor must be cared for by the state.

Sayyidina Ali reminded Malik al-Ashtar about the poor. They did not receive support, resources or opportunities. He wrote: "You must fix a share for them from Baytul Mal (the government treasury). Besides this reservation in cash, you must also reserve a share in-kind of crops etc. from government granaries in cities where food-grains are stored as are cultivated on State-owned land..."[7]

At present, this socialist principle, that is, the state as an instrument to help those in need, has spread, but is not widely practiced in capitalist society. One of the principles of socialism is that the state will be in favor of the majority and those in need should their interests be threatened by the minority and well-to-do. This principle also exists in Islam. In his letter to Malik al-Ashtar, Sayyidina Ali said: "Remember that the displeasure of common men, the have-nots and the depressed persons overbalances the approval of important persons, while the displeasure of a few big people will be excused by the Lord if the general public and the masses of your subjects are happy with you."[8]

The idea of using the concept of "group"* is also from Sayyidina Ali. The members of this group, including the

7 Ibid., letter no. 53, p.497.

8 Ibid., p.487.

* Translator's note: A reference to the dominant group in society.

big traders and other wealthy individuals, according to Sayyidina Ali, did not like justice and always demanded facilities from the government. These demands continued to grow. If the government is in trouble, they are not the group who will be strong and loyally support the government. Meanwhile, the common people, those who are poor and less important among society, they are the ones who will be the foundational pillars of Islam. They are the ones who are the true bond of Islam, and the strength and energy of those who defend Islam against its enemies.[9]

Another feature of socialism, which is to act based on the principles of humanity regardless of descent, rank, gender or religion, has already been clearly practised by Islam. Sayyidina Ali practised this teaching when he advised Malik al-Ashtar not to differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims in matters of helping or punishing them.[10]

The same goes for explaining the causes of poverty. Sayyidina Ali developed another idea that was socialist in nature, the oppression of the common people by the powerful. He said: "The poverty of the people is the actual cause of the devastation and ruination of a country and the main cause of the poverty of the people is the desire of its ruler and officers to amass wealth and possessions whether by fair or foul means. They are afraid of losing their posts

[9] Ibid., p. 487.

[10] Ibid., pp. 485-486.

or positions and sway or rule and want to make the most during the shortest time at their disposal."[11]

Sayyidina Ali also forbade Malik al-Ashtar from giving power over land or water resources which were of public interest to any individual, especially his friends and family. If they were given this power, said Sayyidina Ali, they would oppress others in order to gain profit.[12] This is an important principle of socialism. All the principles of socialism already exist in Islam.

What is still lacking among today's Muslims are modes of thinking in certain areas concerning today's context. These modes of thinking were first implemented by the socialists in Europe. For example, the current patterns of oppression in developing countries need to be understood, there being new forms of knowledge about this which Muslims need to learn to grasp. Although the principles of socialism already exist in Islam, the thinking of today's Muslims in this area is still very deficient.

In this work the question of Islamic teachings and their implementation in institutions is discussed. What some Muslims pontificate about are the teachings of Islam alone. These efforts are not based on extensive knowledge or deep thinking. They only talk about the teachings of Islam which are already known to the public, without connecting them to

11 Ibid., p. 495.
12 Ibid., p. 500.

modern knowledge about the questions being discussed.

Let me explain this with the example of traffic in today's big cities. Are there Islamic teachings that would relate to traffic? Of course there are! We can refer to general teachings in Islam, for example, to be careful when driving a car, to think about the safety of others, to not disturb other people, and so on. Although these teachings are important, they are insufficient to regulate traffic in Kuala Lumpur. These teachings need to be connected to scientific knowledge on traffic in Kuala Lumpur in particular, and traffic in today's context in general. Once this has been implemented, only then can we assume that the teachings of Islam have been complemented with scientific knowledge about our institution of traffic.

What is meant by institution are the methods and social systems to achieve certain goals, complete with the necessary organisations, regulations and people. For example, regarding the question of poverty, it is not enough for us to say that Islam aims to eradicate poverty. We must link this aim with plans for an economic system which reduces poverty, if it is unable to eradicate it. The founders of socialism paid great attention to this economic system. The system of crude capitalism which generally exists in developing countries has not succeeded in reducing poverty. Another system has to be thought of and the one that is most relevant to our needs is the socialist system.

For example, the Malaysian government needs to set up mines, logging companies, rubber plantations and palm oil industries and other enterprises involving thousands of workers and consumers. Similarly, the government needs to set up movie theatres. This is on the condition that those managing it are efficient and honest. Although we allow private sector participation, the government should be largely involved in these areas. Since the government's main purpose is to provide employment opportunities and increase the country's production, the spirit of greed for profit will not prevail in these enterprises. This issue needs to be studied by experts with the necessary vision, that is, with the aim of extensive government involvement in the entrepreneurial sector.

The above is a plan which is in line with socialism. Others follow communism, which completely eliminates the private sector. For governments in developing countries, the burden will be too heavy if the entire private sector is eliminated. The important thing is to work together with the private sector in an economic system where the government will play a large role and control the private sector so that it will not act arbitrarily.

It is clear that Islamic socialism will not be 100 per cent similar to Western socialism. Islam has always recognised the role of revelation in history. In other respects there are many similarities between Islam and Western socialism. The contributions of modern socialism to humanity are

enormous. It has succeeded in eliminating oppression and cruelty towards the working class and the weak in Western society. It opposed imperialism. It succeeded in organising the distribution of income and wealth more effectively than in the past, and it has raised awareness that human suffering can be overcome with the planning of efficient and honest leaders. Anyone who is anti-socialism is anti-ideas which have been highly beneficial.

This anti-socialist attitude generally arises alongside an anti-Western civilization attitude. This anti-Western civilization attitude is frequently exaggerated by some Muslim writers who come from traditional backgrounds. They are not experts in history and Western culture. They have never investigated the things they attack as weaknesses of the West. Their writings are mere incitements as a result of dishonest ways of thinking. Do not misunderstand my attitude as an encouragement that we Muslims should imitate the West and become a tool of cultural imperialism. Since 1954 I have relentlessly opposed the intellectual colonisation of Asian scholars by the West.[13] In my opinion, the struggle for independence still needs to continue, in the

[13] See my writings, "Some Fundamental Problems of Colonialism", *Eastern World*, Nov. 1956, London; "The Captive Mind in Development Studies", *International Social Science Journal*, XXIV, no. 1, 1972, Paris; "The Captive Mind and Creative Development", *International Social Science Journal*, XXVI, no. 4, 1974, Paris; *The Intellectuals in Developing Societies* and *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, Frank Cass, London, 1976.

areas of thought, economic activities and so on. But this issue cannot be solved solely through incitements against Western civilization.

What needs to be opposed is Western colonialism, exploitation by Western capitalism and its cronies in the state, influences from the West or from society itself which undermine morals, and not Western civilization as a whole. The general trend of Islam in Indonesia is not anti-Western civilization. The attitude of anti-Western civilization is harsher in India and Pakistan. Examples are the writings of Iqbal, Maududi, Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi and also Muhammad Asad, an Austrian of Jewish descent who used to be known as Leopold Weiss and who converted to Islam in 1926. The most influential and the biggest obstacle to the progress of Muslims was the writing of Muhammad Asad in 1934, *Islam at the Crossroads*. This was due to the fact that Muhammad Asad came from Europe and had an impact on those who would have thought that he really understood Western civilization.

I will comment on the ideas of three of them – Iqbal, Muhammad Asad and Abul Hasan Nadvi – as examples to show how Muslims were confused by their statements against Western civilization, which distanced Muslims from progress. These statements have been heard for more than half a century. We can also understand why these statements were published before the Second World War. At that time, much of the Muslim world was colonised by the West. Apart

from this there were also groups of Muslims who wanted to imitate the West in a manner that offended Muslims, as was done by Mustafa Kemal, the Turkish dictator after the First World War, who allegedly hurled the Qur'an in a room.* They were indeed pushing Islam into the background. Having an interest in Western civilization at that time was equated with abandoning Islam, due to the nature of Western imperialism and the attitudes of some Muslim leaders who wanted to imitate the West in all matters, some of whom deviated from the foundations of Islam.

The background of Western imperialism, the First World War and the rise of groups which were anti-religion, are what led to the rise of anti-Western sentiment. This sentiment is reflected in the words of Shaikh Mushir Husain Kidwai, a lawyer and writer for the *Islamic Review* journal, when he said: "For Asiatics generally, and for Muslims particularly, Europe does not present the best model in anything except the development of science or mechanical inventions. Its civilization is defective. Its prosperity is like the prosperity or wealth of a robber. Its strength is due to the sucking of human blood."[14]

What he opposes is blind imitation of the West. Here

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* Translator's note: "...act of flinging the Holy Qur-an from one corner of the room to the other." Editorial, "Is Westernization an Unnatural Phenomenon?", *Islamic Review*, vol. XVI, no. 12, p. 427, Dec. 1928.

[14] Shaikh Mushir Husain Kidwai, "After Effects of the Great War", *Islamic Review*, vol. XVIII, no. 11, p. 391, Nov. 1930.

we agree with him and many other Muslim leaders since the 18th century in Turkey. But the following obvious and wise opinion was also expressed by the editor of the *Islamic Review*. He said: "Nations can change dress, discard customs, supplement ideas and concepts, improve social institutions and the rest, without incurring the charge of 'Westernizing' themselves. For really it is nothing extraordinary that is happening. We borrow from each other, and we ought to learn to recognize the debt of gratitude that we owe to each other. The East does not despise the West, and is prepared to take from it what is good; what it must, and will, repudiate is the popular obsession that, in any sense, the West is achieving any sort of moral as well as political conquest."[15]

The question, says the editor, is whether what is taken is in conflict with the Qur'an and Hadith. "If they do not so clash, they should be adopted; for that has been the secret of the growth of Islamic countries throughout the centuries. Islam has never looked askance on progress or anathematized any one kind of dress, nor is Islam the name for any one kind of dress or type of veil or special alphabets. It is another term for our outlook on life. It is the name of certain constant principles which never change."[16]

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[15] Editorial, "Is Westernization an Unnatural Phenomenon?", *Islamic Review*, vol. XVI, no. 12, p. 430, Dec. 1928.

[16] Editorial, "Is Islam Compatible with Material Progress?", *Islamic Review*, vol. XVI, no. 12, p.430, Dec. 1928.

Conditions changed after the Second World War. The Muslim countries that were colonised gained independence. The question for us has a different form now. Western political imperialism has retreated even though the influence of Western capitalism is still strong. People like Muhammad Asad, Maududi and Abul Hasan Nadvi are still crying out against Western civilization in an environment which has already changed. The real dangers of such cries are twofold. Firstly, they will weaken the determination of Muslims to learn from Western sciences which must be part of the ocean of Islamic knowledge. Secondly, they will divert our attention from efforts to eradicate poverty and social injustice which can be strengthened by knowledge from the West because Western civilization has been most successful in contributing to prosperity and social justice through its business activities and knowledge of society. They and others with the same stand can be considered as reactionaries, those who prevent the emergence of a new consciousness which can detach society's foundations from the stream of knowledge. Whatever they have suggested, as long as they incite Muslims to hate Western civilization, will distance Muslims from a consciousness that reaches high and wide.

I, as a sociologist who studied in Europe for 11 years, know more than they do about the weaknesses of Western society. I also followed Western socialist thought for almost 30 years. I understand the weaknesses of socialism without religion. Even critical sources on socialism and Western

society which are deep and intellectual are unknown to these screamers, including Iqbal. The writings of Western scholars since the early 20th century, which are in-depth and extensive, such as those of J.A. Hobson, Alexander Herzen, Leo Tolstoy, Karl Mannheim, Johan Huizinga, Alexis Carrell, Ortega y Gasset, Erich Fromm, Herman Rauschning, C. Wright Mills, and hundreds of other scholars, are unknown to these screamers. Screaming has made their voices hoarse.

A person can criticise other societies if they have already understood and criticised their own society in an in-depth manner instead of just making statements which are vague or in passing. These Muslim screamers do not pay attention to the poor conditions of Muslim society and also do not understand the conditions of Western society. They only highlight the negative attributes of the West while their positive attributes are pushed to the background. The following are the negative attributes which are highlighted: (1) Western civilization colonised Asian and African countries; (2) Western civilization is materialistic and only prioritises the material; (3) Western civilization allows free sex and promotes the satisfaction of carnal desires; (4) Western civilization does not prioritise religion; and (5) Western civilization is in a state of crisis and will collapse.

The following are positive attributes of Western civilization which are veiled by the screamers: (1) Western civilization initiated a new era in human history with their

discoveries, modern science and technology; (2) it has successfully provided sufficient food and other resources; (3) it has successfully eradicated or cured several illnesses which were previously fatal; (4) it has succeeded in changing the state of society to an order which is far more just; and (5) it is testimony to humanity's abilities, such that travel to the moon was made possible.

These are only the main points. As for the accusations of the screamers stated earlier, they are purely seeds of propaganda. Let us analyse them one by one.

With regard to imperialism, Western civilization is not the only actor. As for its materialistic nature, this is a false accusation. From the perspective of philosophy, the orientation of materialism in the West has the fewest followers. There are far more religious members in Western society. If what is meant by that is liking material possessions, what is wrong with that? Does not the Qur'an advise Muslims to secure their share in this world?[17] Demanding material possessions, ease, prosperity and so on are obligated by Islam as long as they are achieved in a permissible manner.

Regarding free sex, it is found in big cities. It was also practiced in Muslim societies in the past. For us, this will not be forced upon our society. Western civilization does not

[17] See *Al-Qur'an*, Al-Qasas, [28:77].

have the power or the desire to force their obscene books upon Muslims. If they are spread in Muslim societies it is because of the efforts of Muslims themselves, those who have obscene souls. They deserve to be blamed more than Western civilization. That Western civilization does not prioritise religion is a false accusation. If Muslims support the efforts of their religious leaders the way Christians support their church, the light of Muslim society will surely shine brightly. As for the state of crisis and collapse, our screamers, due to their lack of expertise in sociology, are unaware of the existence of three processes, namely the emergence of problems, transitions and crises. What the West is experiencing now is not a crisis but the emergence of problems and the process of transition from one pattern of society to another. What do they mean by crisis if over the centuries Western civilization has grown stronger and progressed? Only a fool will deny this. Just look at the statements made by the United Nations regarding the development and growth of Western countries. A people who are able to engage in space travel are not a people who will collapse from a spiritual or cultural crisis.

I admit that there are many serious problems of Western society which are dangerous influences. But we can avoid them as long as we are not influenced by Muhammad Asad who said that Western civilization is a poison for Muslims.[18]

[18] Muhammad Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads*, p. 59. Arafat Publications,

This will only keep Muslims away from Western civilization to the extent that their condition will deteriorate over time. Their position will weaken. The attitude that should be taken is to approach Western civilization with caution and to hold fast to the principles of Islam. The screamers such as Abul Hasan Nadvi, Maududi and Muhammad Asad all encourage Muslims to learn science and technology from the West, while screaming about the dangers and depravity of Western civilization. Is it possible for this to happen? We are advised to learn from those whom we hate and are dangerous to us. Is there a person who can be such a student? This violates the science of education.

A very extreme view was put forth by Muhammad Asad. He said: "But we cannot and must not imitate the Western Civilization if we wish to preserve and to revive the values of Islam. The evil which the intellectual influence of that civilization causes in the body of Islam is far greater than the material profit it could possibly confer."[19] Such an opinion is very dangerous. Firstly, Muhammad Asad gives the impression that the whole of Western civilization is rotten except for its science and technology. Secondly, we as Muslims must imitate the good. What should not be imitated are the bad.

These screamers intentionally hide the good aspects

Lahore, 1969 (9th Edition).

19 Muhammad Asad, ibid, p. 99.

of Western civilization, except for the fields of science and technology. If we make a list of these aspects it will be never-ending. In the West, intellectuals are appreciated. In the Muslim world, they are not. In the West, unemployed workers are given government support. In the Muslim world, they are not. In the West, the rule of law is upheld. In the Muslim world, it is not. In the West, there do not exist millions of people who live like animals in terrible conditions. In the Muslim world, there are many. In the West, ordinary citizens do not have their blood sucked by corrupt leeches who act as government officials. In the Muslim world, this is a daily occurrence. The administrative machinery in the West runs as it should. In the Muslim world, it is chaotic. Perhaps this caused Muhammad Asad to migrate from Pakistan to Switzerland. It seems that he himself could not stand to live in a Muslim country. He has lived in Switzerland since 1958, after occupying a high position in the Pakistani government.

The proposition that Muslims should only learn science and technology from the West is an illusory proposition. It is analogous to proposing that we learn how to build a roof without learning how to build the pillars. What needs to be learnt from the West are not only science and technology but various issues concerning the growth of scientific knowledge. We must take the whole mix of influences and occurrences which caused science and technology to flourish and play an important role in society. Science arose

and flourished as a result of support from the industrial sector and the ruling class. If the industrial sector and the ruling class show little support for scientific knowledge, then society must change its attitude. These matters can be learnt from Western history.

Similarly, scientific knowledge can be used by certain groups for their own evil interests. What actions to take in order to prevent this from happening can be learnt from Western society. There are thousands of issues which should be learnt from the West, the most important for us being those which are not scientific and technological in nature. For example, the issue of "whistle-blowing." "Whistle-blowing" refers to the action of a person from an organisation who exposes corrupt, illegal, deceptive or harmful acts which are committed by said organisation or individuals within the organisation. This movement arose in America and Japan.[20] Should not Muslims learn about it and make it an example of the struggle to uphold goodness and eradicate evil?

In Western society, if there is something that is considered deviant, then there will be those who attack it. While writing this preface, I was reading the writings of several American scientists who were actively working to prevent the misuse of scientific knowledge, the way

[20] See Ralph Nader, Peter J. Petkas, Kate Blackwell, *Whistle Blowing*. Grossman Publishers, New York, 1972.

chemistry and biology are used for the purpose of destroying cities and people in Vietnam.[21] Similarly, research on income distribution in America and other Western countries is very useful for us Muslims so that we will be more aware of the injustices that occur.[22] The same goes for the methods used, as well as the struggles themselves against corruption in the West.

Whoever says that the only things from the West that are useful for us Muslims are science and technology, even though they have good intentions, is actually leading Muslims towards backwardness and slavery. Apart from that, this proposal is completely contrary to Islam, which requires us to learn the history and events of communities, Muslim or not. I am reminded of the story of the people of Thamud which is stated in the Qur'an in Surah Al-Shu'ara [26] and Surah Al-Naml [27]. In the Thamud community's area of residence, there were nine influential people who behaved cruelly and did not do good. They were rebuked by the Prophet Saleh (peace be upon him), who told them to return to the path of religion. Prophet Saleh (peace be upon him) asked them if their state of luxury would remain so forever. Prophet Saleh (peace be upon him) advised them not to commit evil on earth. They mocked Prophet Saleh

[21] See Martin Brown (ed.) *The Social Responsibility of the Scientist*. Free Press, New York, 1971.

[22] Regarding this problem, see Gabriel Kolko, *Wealth and Power in America*. Praeger, New York, 1962.

(peace be upon him), whom they alleged was under a spell.[23]

Prophet Saleh (peace be upon him) was asked to prove the truth. As a test, Prophet Saleh (peace be upon him) challenged them to make their camels drink at the waters, with the rule that each camel took turns. They blocked Prophet Saleh's (peace be upon him) camel. Then punishment befell them. Their houses collapsed. According to the Qur'an: "So they devised their evil plan, but We too made a plan of which they were unaware."[24] It is further stated in the Qur'an: "As a result of their evil deeds, their homes are desolate ruins – there truly is a sign in this for those who know."[25]

The essence of the signs and events in the Qur'an, although different in form according to the relevant time and place, remains true. What is accurate is the cruelty of a small group who are powerful and wealthy, against the group which is poor and weak, as represented by Prophet Saleh (peace be upon him) at that time. What became a test was the source of livelihood, which at that time was the rearing of camels. The result of that cruelty was the destruction of society. This is God's sign for those who understand and know. This means that we Muslims must

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23 In our homeland Malaysia, those who fight for justice and disregard rank and luxury are considered odd at best.

24 *Al-Qur'an*, Al-Naml, [27:50].

25 Ibid., [27:52].

understand the issue of cruelty and the collapse of a country. In the contemporary context this means that Muslims must study the great modern revolutions, or great societal changes which aimed to eradicate oppression. This means that we must understand the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, the Philippine Revolution, the Indonesian Revolution, the Vietnamese Revolution and the social revolution in Europe since the 19th century.

If we listen to Muhammad Asad, Muslims need not pay much attention to European literature, philosophy and history.[26] Western history has always been biased. It emphasises the role of the West in the world and does not emphasise the role of the non-Western world. This rebuke of the biased presentation of Western history is correct.[27] But this does not mean that we Muslims should not care about Western history. The wisdom that can be found in Western history is immeasurable. Therefore, because many Western writings are biased, our interest in studying them in a more

[26] Muhammad Asad, ibid, p. 94.

[27] I myself have touched on the issue of bias in the writings on history from the West. See my writings "Objectivity and the Writing of History", *Islamic Review*, vol. XLII, no. 1, London, 1954; "Reconstruction of Malaysian History", *Revue du Sud-est Asiatique*, no. 3, 1962, Brussels; "Theoretical Aspects of Southeast Asian History", *Asian Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1964, Manila; *Thomas Stamford Raffles: Schemer or Reformer?* Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1971; and *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, Frank Cass, London, 1976.

truthful manner should increase, not decrease, because Western civilization has widely influenced the contemporary world.

Despite the good intentions of Abul Hasan Nadvi, Muhammad Asad, Abul Ala Maududi and Muhammad Iqbal, these cries against Western civilization have helped to preserve in the Islamic world a social system and a class of powerful people which have caused the backwardness of the Muslim community. If Muslims are influenced by critical Western thought about the social system and the groups that act in it, including class exploitation, about the importance of economic aspects in determining other factors of society, about the negative influence of poverty and corruption on personal growth; if these thoughts raise awareness of the necessity for a social revolution driven by social justice, it will definitely shake the position of those in power who want to protect the current system. The wealthy and the scholars who are influenced by the current system will not agree with the notion that Islam is socialist in nature, if this socialist nature prevents them from seizing wealth and livelihood in a manner that would disadvantage the greater society.

Those in power are secretly happy with these Muslim leaders who make a fuss through their cries against the West. It would be better for them to divert their critical attention towards the West as opposed to the powerful in their own society. The attitude of these screamers is also fickle and their statements contradict one another.

Take Abul Ala Maududi. He explains that Muslims are backward because they abandoned the teachings of Islam. He says about the West that: "The principles of endeavor and struggle and intellectual discernment which had been abandoned by the Muslims were taken over by the Western nations. While the Muslims fell into a stupor, the West started . . . going ahead acting upon those very principles to achieve progress which the Muslims had forsaken. They marched on until they captured the leadership of mankind which the Muslims lost. And then their sword conquered the better part of the globe. Their thoughts and ideas, arts and sciences, and principles of civilization and culture dominated their lives and engulfed completely their minds and souls."[28]

Maududi then explains how the Muslim world was weak in its confrontation with the West. He blames Muslim religious leaders who did not make the effort to learn the foundations of science and intellect of Western civilization. Maududi limited the task of these scholars to learning Western science and technology.[29] Maududi previously considered Western civilization a poisonous tree, its flowers

[28] Sayyid Abul Ala Maudidi, *The Sick Nations of the Modern Age*, p. 8. Islamic Publications, Lahore, 1969. The original manuscript was published in Urdu in 1935. The English translation is by Khurshid Ahmad.

[29] Ibid., p. 10.

full of thorns, and its leaves emitting a deadly gas.[30] It has abandoned God and is standing on shaky foundations. What I find odd is how such a civilization could defeat Islamic civilization. Why has a civilization, which according to Maududi has taken the principles of progress from Islam, become a great danger to the world at large? Maududi should have suggested Western civilization as an example for Muslims even though Muslims do not have to imitate it as a whole.

Similarly, Iqbal's opinions are self-contradictory. Iqbal states several times that the Muslim world has moved closer to the West. He says: "During the last five hundred years religious thought in Islam has been practically stationary. There was a time when European thought received inspiration from the world of Islam. The most remarkable phenomenon of modern history, however, is the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West. There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam. Our only fear is that the dazzling exterior of European culture may arrest our movement and we may fail to reach the true inwardness of that culture. During all the centuries of our intellectual stupor Europe has been seriously thinking on the great problems in which

[30] Ibid., p. 3.

the philosophers and scientists of Islam were so keenly interested."[31] Looking at the above, it is clear that Iqbal praises Western civilization and wants Muslims to approach it. In his magnum opus, *Javid-Nama*, Iqbal expressed a different opinion. Westerners, he said, have lost sight of paradise. They hunt for the pure spirit in their bellies.[32] "The flame of the Europeans is damped down, their eyes are perceptive, but their hearts are dead."[33] Such statements are of no use to Muslims because they are general and unclear in nature. What is meant by "their hearts are dead" when the efforts of Westerners to improve the wellbeing of human life, eradicate diseases and so on are so extensive? The struggles of Westerners in various fields of humanity outweigh those of any other society. The country which paid high respect to Iqbal during his lifetime by conferring the title "Sir" upon him was a Western country, England, not Egypt, Turkey or Iran.

I started reading Iqbal about 30 years ago, in Johor Bahru. I read his book *Asrari-i Khudi*, from the library of my uncle, Ungku Abdul Hamid, the father of Prof. Ungku Abdul Aziz, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaya. I

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31 M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 7. Ashraf, Lahore, 1969. This book was originally a lecture given by Iqbal in Madras in 1926.

32 M. Iqbal, *Javid-Nama*, p. 57, tr. A.J. Arberry. Allen and Unwin, London, 1966.

33 Ibid., p. 58.

got the book from Prof. Ungku Abdul Aziz. Ungku Abdul Hamid was fond of philosophy and Sufism. When I arrived in Amsterdam, my attention to Iqbal continued. About ten years ago I began to feel dissatisfied with Iqbal's writings. I acknowledge Iqbal's great service to Muslims in India. The same goes for his high status as a poet. What disappoints me are the problems which are the focus of attention in those poems, and the anti-Western statements which are purely rebukes. Apart from this there are many other statements which will confuse Muslims.

In *Javid-Nama*, Iqbal touches on communism and capitalism, which he both rejects. Communism, says Iqbal, promotes camaraderie based on the belly.[34] Iqbal gives the impression that the only movements in the West are communism and capitalism. This impression has been ingrained in the minds of Muslims to the extent that the influence against Western civilization has increased. In fact, it is the strand of socialism that has prevented the influence of communism in Western Europe and America, and which has changed the nature of the capitalist system to the extent that it was forced to submit to the aims of social justice. Iqbal did not highlight this strand, and only communism and capitalism were highlighted. This gives rise to the impression that people like Iqbal are deliberately looking for the weaknesses of the West and not its strengths. From an Islamic

[34] Ibid., p. 57.

point of view, a fair analysis should take both into account, after which we should see which outweighs the other.

Iqbal's contradictory opinions are very clear in his other statements. He once wrote in his letter to Sir Francis Younghusband that "Islam is Bolshevism plus God".* In an interview with *The Bombay Chronicle* before he left for London to attend the Round Table Conference in September 1931, Iqbal said that "Islam is a Socialistic religion".[35] From London Iqbal went to Rome upon the invitation of Mussolini, the Italian dictator, and gave a lecture there. In his lecture notes he referred to Islam as socialist.[36] In the notes of the book he intended to write, Iqbal opined that Christianity is not an enemy or rival of Islam. It was also an effort to build a civilization.[37] If this is Iqbal's opinion, we cannot consider Iqbal as being anti-Western civilization because Christianity and the strand of Western socialism gave great force to that civilization. In one of his last poems before he passed away in 1938, Iqbal praised Lenin. The name of the poem is "Lenin, the Song of Angels and the Injunction of God". In this poem Iqbal illustrates how Lenin was called by God and Lenin asked where he could find a worshipper. Lenin searched but could not find anyone. What

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* Translator's note: See B.A. Dar (ed.). *Letters and Writings of Iqbal*, p. 57. Iqbal Academy, Karachi, 1969.

35 See B.A. Dar (ed.). *Letters and Writings of Iqbal*, p. 57.

36 Ibid., p. 81.

37 Ibid., p. 89.

he found were humans who oppressed and those who were oppressed. He asked when the ship of capitalism would sink. Lenin's words were met by the feeling that the old order of society still continued. After that, God commanded that all unjust societies should be reformed and replaced with just ones. This was His command: "Arise and awake the poor of My World; shake the doors and walls of the mansions of the rich."[38]

Thus, in the last moments of his life Iqbal approached socialism and portrayed Islam as a system which is socialist in nature. Some Muslim writers do not agree with the term "Islamic socialism". We supposedly consider Islam to be imperfect such that it has to be supplemented with socialism. When I published my journal *Progressive Islam* in Amsterdam from 1954–1955, I was once asked by Maulana Maududi's followers in Pakistan why the word "progressive" was used. They said that it was as if Islam was not "progressive". I answered that was not the case. I used the word "progressive" as an explanation of the nature of Islam. Those who oppose the use of the term "Islamic socialism" generally agree that Islam is actually socialist in nature.

Apart from that, they are not mature enough in their analysis of the history of the growth of religion and civilization. In the history of Islam, such terms have been

[38] Luce-Claude Maitre, *Introduction to the Thought of Iqbal*, pp. 42-43. Tr. A.M. Dar. Iqbal Academy, Karachi (n.d).

used with the consensus of the scholars. For example, there is Shi'a Islam, there is the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah, Mu'tazilite Islam and the schools of thought among the Sunnis. There has never been an accusation against the Sunnis that by naming their sect Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah, they consider Islam to be imperfect. The rise and disappearance of schools of thought is certainly encouraged by Islam. Islamic socialism can be considered as a political school of thought that separates itself from that other political school of thought, capitalism, which is tyrannical and is supported by Muslims. Among the schools of thought there are usually those that are right, those that are wrong and those that are apostate. Islamic socialism is a political school of thought which is one hundred per cent based on Islam.

Those who think we are adding something to Islam which is already perfect by using the term "Islamic socialism" do not understand what it really means. We are not adding new teachings to the area of the pillars of Islam or the pillars of faith. We are also not reducing them. The new thinking which needs to be added is not in these areas but in the areas where there is no perfection, not in the area of revelation but in the area of philosophy. We have to differentiate between three dimensions, which are, Islam as teachings born from revelation, Islam as a civilization and Islam as a blend of philosophy, knowledge, laws and rules which were introduced by humanity based on the above teachings, in order to implement or explain at length

the above teachings. The last is a part which evolves in history. It changes and is imperfect and constantly needs to be improved based on the guidance of the verse from the Qur'an that God "taught man what he did not know."[39] Whoever believes that perfection has been achieved in this area is either a madman or an extraordinary fool.

The thinking of contemporary Islamic socialism regarding this imperfect field is subject to and related to historical processes, as is the case with the thinking of Imam al-Ghazali and Abdul Rahman Ibn Khaldun. Whoever criticises or rejects al-Ghazali's *Ihya 'Ulum al-Din* without understanding it is a fool. Similarly, anyone who considers this work to be perfect is a fool. In Islam, only the Qur'an is perfect. Our field of thought concerns the realm of the imperfect. This field needs to be dug up from time to time, added to and reformed. The one who rejects this effort is someone who violates the teachings of Islam.

What more in the areas of thought where Muslims are very weak, such as income and wealth distribution. Poverty in the Muslim world is blatantly obvious. There is not a single book about this that has been written by earlier scholars. Regarding this issue of poverty, Prince Said Halim Pasha, a well-known Turkish Muslim leader, advised Muslims to learn from Europe. The Muslim world respects religion more than Europe, he said. "But unfortunately it is

[39] *Al-Qur'an*, Al-'Alaq, [96:5].

not the same with the economic condition of the Muslim peoples. It is here that we touch the wound. From that point of view, the comparison is all in favor of the peoples of the West. In proportion as their material prosperity and economic power have increased, those of Muslim societies have declined. In this respect the Islamic polity is greatly to be pitied; it has every cause to envy Western peoples, and has much to learn from them."[40] Poverty which is highly detrimental to the progress of Muslim society has to be given proper attention. This is why Syed Jamaluddin Afghani condemned a person as not being learned and wise if he or she did not dedicate their minds to this issue. In one of his essays on the benefits of philosophy, Syed Jamaluddin Afghani attacked Muslim scholars who distanced themselves from knowledge and science, who did not pay attention to big issues such as poverty in Muslim society. He said: "There is no doubt or question that if someone does not spend his whole life on this great problem, and does not make this grievous phenomenon the pivot of his thought, he has wasted and ruined his life, and it is improper to call him a sage, which means one who knows the essential conditions of beings."[41]

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[40] Said Halim Pasha, "The Reform of Muslim Society", p. 119. *Islamic Culture*, vol. 1, Jan. 1927 (Hyderabad). Prince Said Halim Pasha was once the Prime Minister of Turkey. He was killed by an Armenian in Rome.

[41] Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*, p. 121. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968.

If we use the above yardstick to measure Iqbal and the other screamers, then they have wasted their lives. Iqbal's poems hardly touch on the issue of poverty. He tells all kinds of stories in his poems. His poems are full of all kinds of tales and allegories. The problem which is fully discussed by Iqbal is not the issue of poverty, the issue of oppression by the powerful, the issue of corruption, the issue of hindrances towards progress, the issue of the influence of the immoral ruling class on individuals. What is much discussed is the issue of character development (khudi). In addition, Iqbal criticises European society which prioritises the ease of life supposedly in excess, hunting for the pure spirit in its stomach.

Such criticisms, if conveyed to poor Muslims who are suffering, who walk barefoot in the winter, many of whom are starving, millions of whom have been struck by diseases and cannot be treated because they cannot afford to do so, who sleep without a roof over their heads, are like singing with a fake voice. Where is the Islamic conscience in the advice to the starving to not be greedy? It is sinful to give this advice to people who do not have enough to eat because it does not help those people and could even extinguish their spirit to strive for their right to eat. To those who have lost their sexual desire, let us not recommend that they control

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Contains English translations of Jamaluddin Afghani's most important essays.

their desires by criticising other people who supposedly have excessive desire. In fact, attention to deficiencies must be encouraged and not diverted to other areas of thought with different intentions.

The attainment of wellbeing in terms of sufficient nourishment and material goods is the goal of Islam. Does not the Qur'an state: "Eat and drink the sustenance God has provided and do not cause corruption in the land."[42] What is recommended is not just what is needed but also what is pleasant, delicious food. "People, eat what is good and lawful from the earth."[43] Apart from these verses, there are several descriptions in the Qur'an of paradise, filled with ease and material prosperity. Is Islam materialistic because it prioritises the physical and the material in paradise? Certainly not, because the approach towards the material is based on the belief in God and revelation.

Our homeland was recently hit by a typhoon of advice which came from the corridors of power. Muslims must supposedly prioritise spirituality, must be firm in their faith, and must avoid material things.[44] I am tired of hearing such statements, as if the faith of Muslims is so weak. What needs to be emphasised is not the faith and spirituality of Muslims

42 *Al-Qur'an*, Al-Baqarah, [2:60].

43 Ibid., [2:168].

44 Avoiding alcohol is not emphasised because this habit is ingrained in the corridors of power.

but the issues of poverty, corruption, oppression, poor character and other problems which really suck the blood of Muslims.

Apart from the above, there has also been a wave of tangled, fanatical, shallow and irresponsible thinking. Take for example, the excuse which is used to separate socialism from Islam, that is, socialism which is not anti-religion. They say that the basis of Islam is revelation while socialism is man-made. The two cannot be mixed. I was surprised to hear that. Since when has Islam opposed anything man-made, as long as it does not oppose God's commands?

There are also those who object to the use of the term "Islamic socialism" with the excuse that the communists also use it. They characterise their orientation as scientific socialism. This will supposedly help the communists. If that is the case, our own Prime Minister, Datuk Hussein Onn, was helping the communists when he said Islam is "progressive" in his speech at the opening of the Musabaqah Al-Qur'an on 11 September 1976 in Kuala Lumpur. Is it not the communists who incessantly attach the word "progressive" to their efforts? Datuk Hussein Onn also said that Muslim society in its golden age had given birth to secularism. It is the communists who recognise themselves as very radical adherents to secularism. What is the philosophical orientation which is called secularism? That orientation was given the name "secularism" by G.J. Holyoake (1817–1906) as a worldview

which abandons the principles of religion. The overall purpose of human life is to achieve prosperity, wellbeing and ease based on the five senses. Humans, according to secularism, do not need to refer to the afterlife and the belief in God.[45]

In the 20th century, the word secularism is also used to refer to prioritising worldly needs. In political terms, secularism refers to a country which is not based on a particular religion even though the country respects religion, such as India, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia and other countries in general. Datuk Hussein Onn certainly did not use the notion of secularism in the sense of the non-religious philosophical orientation. Secularism refers to an attitude of emphasising the importance of worldly progress which is also encouraged by Islam. I mention this because of the accusations which are levelled against those who use the term "Islamic socialism", that is, to add an -ism to Islam is as if to suggest that Islam is not pure; such a criticism can also be levelled against our Prime Minister and all Muslims who use Western terms to explain the nature of Islam. For example, it would be wrong for us to say that Islam is a democracy, because the word "democracy" originates from

[45] Regarding the meaning of secularism, see R.W. Frank, "Secularism", in Vergilius Ferm, (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Littlefield / Adams, Patterson, New Jersey, 1959, and E.C. Waterhouse, "Secularism", in J. Hastings, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1934.

the West. Similarly, the leaders of UMNO and PAS are wrong when they say that Malaysia's system of governance is a parliamentary democracy because the words "democracy" and "parliament" originate from the West, and were taught to us by the British colonisers.

As for the objection to the use of the term "Islamic socialism", because the term "socialism" is also used by the communists to name their orientation, this is very misleading. If that were the case, there are many words which we cannot use because these words are also used by the communists to carry out their goals, such as the words "democracy", "republic", "progressive", "scientific", "exploitation", "national" and so on. Communism recognises its system of governance as a "people's democracy." So, the leaders of UMNO and PAS would also be accused by those who are confused of helping the communists, like those who use the term "Islamic socialism" are accused of helping the communists because of the word "socialism." Even more so after the establishment of Barisan Nasional by Tun Abdul Razak, at a time when the infiltration of communists into UMNO was at its peak. Is not the name "Barisan" well-liked by those who resemble communists in the history of political parties in our homeland?

I am not suggesting that we should accuse Barisan Nasional of helping the communists because they use the word "Barisan", a name which was originally used by communist-like factions in the political history of our

country. In fact, Tun Abdul Razak could have continued using the name "Alliance", which originates from the period of independence under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman, even with the participation of PAS, Gerakan and the People's Progressive Party, and even though the organisations and laws which he introduced had changed. The Alliance Party was buried in secret and we were not given the reasons as to why it disappeared.

The reason why we use the term "Islamic socialism" is because socialism brings about new ways of scientific thinking about the organisation of society in a way that can be adapted to the teachings of Islam. What is wrong if we were to give birth to an Islamic system of insurance? The science of insurance is a new science. The good thing is that we take and organise a system of insurance based on Islam. It is this attitude which stirred the soul of the Muslim community during the golden era several centuries after Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) passed away. They took from Greece, Rome, Persia, India and other countries not just scientific knowledge, but also philosophy and ideas of social organisation which were adapted according to the purpose of Islam even though their origins were from non-Muslim societies, and sometimes from thinkers who did not believe in God and revelation, such as Greek thinkers like Aristotle (383–322 BC). What I suggest here is that we need to repeat this process for the progress of contemporary Muslim society.

We Muslims do not need to be afraid of negative influences from the West if we feel that our faith is strong enough. These influences can be overcome if we explore the whole world of Western thought with an open mind and take what is good in order to strengthen Muslims in a manner that is sincere and honest, not by slandering the West, deceiving oneself, deliberately shouting insults at the West and covering up its virtues. What these screamers are doing is the same as what several Orientalists and Western writers did to Islamic civilization. They deliberately painted a false and biased picture as was done by Muhammad Qutb about America. He said: "As for America, it is sufficient to quote American statistics which show that 38% of secondary school girls are pregnant. The percentage of pregnancy among university graduates is less than that because they are more experienced in using contraceptives."[46]

The above is a serious accusation about free sex in America. Unfortunately, Muhammad Qutb did not give even one piece of evidence. The source of the percentage is not mentioned at all. Is this what Islam recommends, to accuse without evidence? The figure of 38 per cent is unusually large and is unprecedented in the world. Muhammad Qutb wrote the above more than 15 years ago in Egypt. Now, according to him, it has probably increased to 50 per cent,

[46] Muhammad Qutb, *Islam the Misunderstood Religion*, p. 268. The Board of Islamic Publications, Delhi, 1968.

because American society is getting worse, according to his thinking. If we assume that half of these pregnant girls give birth to illegitimate children, it is already 25 per cent. Sooner or later America will be a country of illegitimate children. Does this make sense? Should hatred towards a particular society allow us to criticise it to such an extent without any evidence? This does not make sense, not for one school, let alone for all of America.

Such statements will influence Muslims to stay away from useful knowledge from America, as is the case with these screamers. One thing I realised is that they do not study and understand Western civilization. They are powerless to influence the educated classes of Muslim society. It is others who are blamed, and not their own failures. They want Muslims to consider them as examples, to hate Western civilization and to close their minds to Western knowledge because almost everything except their science and technology is considered inferior. They want Muslims to sink in failure the way they themselves have failed to lead the thinking of the Islamic world at the highest level, not at the level of half-educated teenagers whose minds have already been closed by them.

I am reminded of a statement made by a Russian intellectual and fighter for justice, Alexander Herzen (1812–1870). He said: "The old and the vanquished does not immediately descend into the grave. The resistance and

longevity of that which is at the point of vanishing are based on the instinct of self-preservation inherent to all that exists. This is the instinct that defends to the utmost everything once endowed with life. Universal economy does not allow the existing things to descend into the grave before they have exhausted all their strength."[47]

The activities of the strand which prevent Muslims from exploring the world of Western thought, with its anti-Western civilization slogans, are activities which defend a group threatened by the loss of its influence. If the younger generation of Muslims delve into the world of Western thought, the screamers will not be able to lead them because they are not proficient in the knowledge and issues of the contemporary world. Would anyone with an open mind accept the intellectual leadership of Maulana Maududi and Muhammad Asad?

Maulana Maududi opposed the participation of women in politics, from becoming election candidates and being people's representatives in parliament. Muslim women also, according to Maulana Maududi, cannot be ministers or administrative officials in the government, to fill important positions.[48] Let us then look at the conclusion of Abul Hasan

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[47] Alexander Herzen, "Letters on the Study of Nature", in his compilation of works, *Selected Philosophical Works*, p. 213. Tr. L. Navrozov. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1956.

[48] See Syed Abul Ala Maududi, *Islamic Law and Constitutions*, tr. Khurshid Ahmad, Jamaat-e-Islamic Publications, Karachi, 1955, p. 86.

Ali Nadvi. For the Muslim world, he says, there are only two ways. First, the Muslim world can surrender everything to the West, accept its philosophy of life, conception of the world, spirituality and system of morals as a whole. The other way is to take Western science and technology in order to strengthen Muslims.[49] This conclusion is very shallow and betrays a lack of understanding of the issue. Accepting only Western science and technology will not possibly, will not necessarily and will not at all strengthen Muslims. What we need to choose from are all parts of Western civilization, as long as what is taken is in accordance with Islam, as I have explained.

In order to provide impactful leadership in this selection process, it is insufficient for us to keep uttering the teachings of Islam which are already known and not doubted by Muslims. We ourselves must enter the world of Western thought. They feel that they are experts in Western thought after reading some books here and there. Actually, they have not understood it even a little. They are not to be depended upon in this issue because their feelings against Western civilization have obstructed their vision; at the same time, they are not willing to spend years following Western thought and are not willing to study thousands of Western books during their lifetimes. While their desires and sincerity should be respected, Muslims should not be left to

[49] Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi, *Western Civilization*, Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow, 1969, pp. 195-196.

be influenced by their attitude towards Western civilization and its knowledge.

Their weakness is their failure to separate the parts of the Sharia which need to be followed and those which need to be left behind. In Maulana Maududi's conception of an Islamic state, non-Muslims cannot be soldiers. Only Muslims can fight to defend the Islamic state. They are also not allowed to occupy important positions which determine policy.[50] In the current situation, they cannot be ministers. If we listen to Maududi, is it wrong if there are Coptic Christians in the Egyptian army? Furthermore, in the last war against Israel there was a Coptic officer who did great service to the extent that he was given a promotion by Anwar Sadat. Maududi also considers arts such as dancing, music and painting as activities which are not in accordance with Islam.[51]

What is even stranger is Maududi's opinion of the Imam Mahdi. According to Maulana Maududi, Imam Mahdi is someone who exists in the modern era who is extraordinarily skilled in contemporary knowledge and has extraordinary leadership abilities.[52] Oddly, Imam Mahdi, according to Maududi, will not shave his beard, will not

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50 Abul Ala Maududi, *Rights of non-Muslims in Islamic State*, p. 25, 34. Tr. Khurshid Ahmad. Islamic Publications, Lahore, 1968.

51 Abul Ala Maududi, *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*, p. 29. Tr. Al-Ashari. Islamic Publications, Lahore, 1972.

52 Ibid., p. 42.

dress in European clothing and will not live a modern lifestyle.[53] I admit that the conception of a great leader who is awaited by Muslims is very important but I do not understand why the existence of his beard is important. Are the capabilities, strength and faith of a leader dependent upon his beard and clothing?

It is clear that those screamers against Western civilization have failed to provide fair intellectual leadership because they do not understand the contemporary world of thought that originates from the West. However, their anxiety is not at all based on illusions. It is true that there are influences from the West which are unhealthy for Muslim society. But there are also healthy influences. What I doubt is how they formulate this issue. With their shallow understanding of the West, they already consider themselves experts.

Within Muslim society there are actually three groups. The first blindly follows the West. They are ignorant of Islam and also of the world of Western thought. The second is anti-Western civilization and has a shallow understanding of the world of Western thought. The third include those who genuinely try to understand the West with the intention of taking the good and rejecting the bad in all areas of thought, without denigrating the West. The hope for Muslims is the success of this last group, not the first and second. I myself belong to the last strand. In order to prove how those

[53] Ibid., p. 146.

screamers do not understand the West and the issues among Muslims, I will, in the future, God willing, write about those aspects of the West which we should prevent from spreading among Muslims. However, we should not rush to be anti-Western civilization. If a chicken's droppings smell bad, let us not be anti-chicken. Its dropping are smelly but its eggs are tasty. As long as we need the eggs we should not be anti-chicken but only anti-droppings. Our screamers became anti-chicken because they could not stand the smell of its droppings and do not know about its eggs. Their noses only know how to smell what is smelly.

In closing, let me appeal to those who read this book, who disagree with my opinions, to reject them with skillful and knowledgeable arguments. Do not scream just because you are angry. Do not secretly incite and accuse those who advocate for Islamic socialism for Muslims as helping the communists. If you want to argue, do it in an Islamic manner and as a brave human being. Write clearly in a newspaper or a magazine.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr Ismail Hashim for his assistance in translating the following text from English. Because of other affairs, I did not have the time to translate my work into our national language. I used the time to write this preface. It should also be mentioned that I translated all the excerpts in this preface from English.

Johor Bahru, 18 September, 1976.

ISLAM AND SOCIALISM

During the last few decades there have been a number of attempts to discuss the relation between Islam and socialism by Muslims themselves. Many of these attempts were not based on sufficient knowledge of socialism, although some were. Before we go further let us define what socialism is. A rather thoroughgoing and accurate definition of socialism was the one suggested by Durkheim. He said: "Socialism is not a science, a sociology in miniature – it is a cry of grief, sometimes of anger, uttered by men who feel most keenly our collective malaise. Socialism is to the facts which produce it what the groans of a sick man are to the illness with which he is afflicted, to the needs that torment him."[1]

Another major characteristic of socialism is the doctrine which "demands the connection of all economic functions, or of certain among them, which are at the present time

[1] Emile Durkheim, *Socialism*, tr. C. Sattler, ed. Alvin Gouldner, Collier Books, New York, 1962, p. 41.

diffuse, to the directing and conscious centers of society."[2] The doctrine of the class struggle, the abolition of private property and a host of many others belong to particular schools of socialism rather than the general trend of thought identified as socialism. If we bear this definition of socialism in mind, then we can see the harmony between Islam and socialism.

The other major characteristics of socialism are mainly the following: the belief in the rule of law; the striving for the greatest welfare and justice for the greatest number; the subordination of individual interest to collective interest; the indignation against poverty and exploitation; the glorification of work and the condemnation of idleness; the doctrine of human equality; the belief in moulding the environment to condition the development of the individual; the limitation of the right of property ownership; and the recognition that in the process of acquiring wealth injustice can be committed against others.

Due to the limitations of space, I shall devote more attention to the views of Muslim individuals rather than to a comprehensive presentation of Qur'anic sources. These sources are numerous and cover the different aspects of life.[3] Let us start with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the founder of Islam. He was aiming at a future

[2] Ibid., p. 54. Durkheim said this in 1896.

[3] See Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Democracy of Islam*, van Hoeve, the Hague, 1956.

society where there would be no poverty and exploitation. As Durkheim said, socialism is entirely oriented toward the future. "It is above all a plan for the reconstruction of societies, a program for a collective life which does not exist as yet or in the way it is dreamed of, and which is proposed to men as worthy of their preference. It is an ideal. It concerns itself much less with what is or was than what ought to be."[4]

The future society desired by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is one where there shall be no poverty. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that a time will come when a person will wander about to give charity with no one to accept it.[5] In the Islamic religion, the poor, by the sole reason of their poverty, have rights to the wealth of the rich and the proceeds from the state. The principle that the wealth of the rich should be acquired by the state to be distributed to the poor was established at a very early period. The taxing of such wealth is considered an act of purification, indicating the idea that concealed injustice may be committed in the act of acquiring such wealth.[6] This was made one of the pillars of Islam (zakat).

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4 E. Durkheim, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

5 *Sahih al-Bukhari*, "Kitab al-Zakat", nos. 492-495, Vol. II. Tr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan. Taleem-ul-Quran Trust, Gujranwala, Pakistan, 1971.

6 See *Al-Qur'an*, At-Tawbah, [9:103]. "Of their goods, take alms so that thou purify and sanctify them."

Though the amount is one-fortieth of the wealth, the Islamic state is allowed to raise more by other means. The important socialist principle is the utilisation of state power to acquire the wealth of the rich for the benefit of the poor. A standard is present to decide who should pay the zakat and who should not. In the collection of the zakat there should be no abuse or injustice. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) warned his governors to beware of the indictment of the oppressed (dakwat al-mazlum).[7]

Another important socialist idea is the dignity of labour. Here Islam also emphasises the value and dignity of labour. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Nobody has ever eaten a better meal than that which he has earned by working with his own hands."[8] The appreciation of labour has characterised Muslim thought throughout history. Ibn Khaldun, the discoverer of modern sociology wrote in the 14th century some interesting things about labour, anticipating 19th-century European thought. He considered labour and demand as the main source of the value of a product.[9]

Value was also considered by Ibn Khaldun as determined by society and circumstances. This includes the value of a profession. Persons occupying offices dealing with

7 *Sahih al-Bukhari, op. cit.*, vol. II, no. 573, pp. 333-334.

8 Ibid., no. 286, p. 162.

9 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 2, pp. 311-317. Tr. F. Rosenthal. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1958.

religious matters, such as judges, muftis, teachers, prayer leaders, muezzins and the like, were, as a rule, not wealthy. Despite the honour attached to these occupations, the public demand for them was less urgent than other necessities of life.[10]

Income and property, according to Ibn Khaldun, may be obtained through taxation (government income), through hunting and fishing, through agriculture, through commerce, through craftsmanship and industry and through service for others. In all these, except taxation and wealth that was accrued through the prestige of rank, labour was the source of value. "It thus becomes clear that gains and profits, in their entirety or for the most part, are value realized from human labor."[11] Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on the value of labour did not arise merely from his sociological observation. It also arose out of his Islamic background.

The same regarding the idea that the wealth a man accrues results from the labour of others who are less well-off and the poor. As reported by Abu Darda, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Seek me among your weak ones, for you are given provision, or are given help, only by reason of the presence of your weak ones."[12]

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10 Ibid., pp. 334-335.

11 Ibid., p. 314.

12 *Mishkat al-Masabih*, vol. III, p. 1087. Tr. James Robson. Ashraf, Lahore, 1964. This is a collection of the sayings of Mohammed by al-Baghawi (died 510 A.H.) revised by Waliuddin al-Tibrizi in 737 A.H.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) censured Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (died 671 or 675), a close companion who later became a general and governor of Iraq for assuming an air of superiority over those who were lesser in rank and wealth. He said to Sa'd: "Are you given help and provision for any other reason than the presence of your weak ones?"[13] Another close companion of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Abu Dhar al-Ghiffari (died 653) said of the Prophet the following: "My friend ordered me to observe seven things. He ordered me to love the poor and be near them; he ordered me to consider my inferior and not consider my superior; he ordered me to join ties of relationship even when relatives are at a distance; he ordered me not to ask anyone for anything; he ordered me to speak the truth even when it is bitter; he ordered me not to fear, for God's sake, the reproach that anyone may cast on me; and he ordered me to repeat often, 'There is no might and no power except in God,' for these words are part of the treasure under the Throne."[14]

As far as objectives, attitudes and efforts are concerned, Islam harmonises with socialism. This is the reason why Muslim thinkers from the time of al-Afghani (1838-1897) to the present speak of Islamic socialism.[15] But the term

It is based on the authoritative earlier sources.

13 Ibid., p. 1085.

14 Ibid., p. 1090.

15 On Afghani's socialism, see Sami A. Hanna, "Al-Afghani: A Pioneer of

"socialism" as applied to Islam is a recent phenomenon of the late 19th century. The necessity arose as a result of the emergence of socialism as a force and humanitarian trend in Europe. The Muslims who were most concerned were those actively participating in social and political struggle and competing with others who were inspired by Western socialism. One of the earliest and most politically significant reactions to Western socialist thinking came from Indonesia.

In 1924, Haji Omar Said Tjokroaminoto, the leader of Sarekat Islam, then the biggest political party in Indonesia, published a monograph (113 pages) on Islam and socialism.[16] It was originally an address at the Second Islamic Congress, 19-21 May, 1924, held in Garut, Java. It arose out of the need to counteract communist propaganda. Tjokroaminoto's party, the Sarekat Islam, was seriously infiltrated by communist elements which led to a split in 1923.

Tjokroaminoto made a distinction between types of socialism, one tied to a philosophy with a religious foundation, the other without. Of the different theories of socialism he said: "All these theories of socialism also aim at improving the fate of the poorest and the greatest in number,

Islamic Socialism", *The Muslim World*, vol. LVII, no. 1, 1967.

16 H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, *Islam dan Sosialisme*, Bulan Bintang, Djakarta. 1950. (Fourth printing). Editor's note: In Malaysia this has been republished by Gerakbudaya, Petaling Jaya (2018).

so that they have a life conforming to human dignity, by way of eliminating the causes of poverty. These theories together condemn the present society, the economic and legal order and also the affairs of religion. They are also tied together in suggesting the need for change or revolution, though in their belief in revolution the use of violence is not necessarily a condition. Though they have a similar view of the evils of social life, on other matters they differ."[17]

Tjokroaminoto saw Islam as a form of socialism. He said: "The ideal of socialism in Islam is not less than thirteen centuries old and it cannot be said that it arises out of the influence of European nations. I do not intend to suggest that during that time there was already systematic propaganda for socialism as today, but I seriously say here that the foundation of socialism was there in the collective Islamic life at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and this was put into effect more extensively and simply than at any time in Europe after the time of our Prophet."[18]

Regarding state ownership of the means of production, Tjokroaminoto suggested that this was Islamic. In the time of the Prophet, the state owned and acquired land. It is interesting how Tjokroaminoto linked Marx's theory of surplus value and its expropriation by the capitalists

[17] Ibid., p. 11. The translation is mine.

[18] Ibid., p. 15. The translation is mine.

to Islam. The Islamic prohibition of usury, according to Tjokroaminoto, is the same as a prohibition against the immoral capitalist expropriation of surplus value.[19] The reforms carried out by the Prophet were thoroughly in the spirit of socialism. The instances cited by Tjokroaminoto are the following, in his own words:

"With the law of zakat Islam intended to make it obligatory for the rich to spend on behalf of the poor. In the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) land was the greatest source of livelihood for the working class, and as I have explained earlier, land was owned by the state. Small industry from pre-Islamic times was run by the poor or the slave for the sole profit and welfare of the owners, most of whom were harsh and oppressive. Before the advent of Islam, those who worked in industry were extremely looked down upon by the aristocracy, while the slaves who functioned as labourers were treated as animals by their capitalist masters. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) immediately raised the status of labour and workers. Though he descended from the highest Arab aristocracy, he worked as a trader before his preoccupation as a Prophet took up his entire time. As a recognized prophet he became 'the spiritual and worldly ruler over Arabs and the Muslim territory', but he mended his own clothes and shoes. The biggest step he took in the direction of industrial socialism

[19] Ibid., p.19.

was when he raised the status of the slave to that of the free man. The slaves were given rights which they never had before.[20] The slaves were made fellow workers; they were given positions of command in the army, or to become heads of other undertakings, while in yet other spheres as in the family, they became members of the family who treated them as animals before the coming of Islam. That being the case, the slaves took part in sharing the welfare and the profit of their masters. Truly, the step taken by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to improve the condition of the working class during his time, was unsurpassed in greatness in the economic history of the world."[21]

Tjokroaminoto was not blind to the fact that during the last thirteen centuries, despotism, autocracy and egoistic materialism had chiselled at the foundation of Islam. As long as the Qur'an is still with us, the ideal of democracy and socialism in Islam shall remain alive.[22] He said: "If we Muslims truly understand and practise the teachings of Islam, we cannot avoid becoming a true democrat and a true socialist."[23]

I have presented the views of Tjokroaminoto, an

20 On the reform of slavery in Arabia, see Syed Hussein Alatas. "The Islamic Conception of Religion and Social Ideal", *Islamic Literature*, vol. XV, no. 2, 1969, Lahore.

21 Tjokroaminoto, *op.cit.*, pp. 19-20.

22 Ibid., p. 101.

23 Ibid., p. 102. The translation is mine.

important pioneer of Indonesian nationalism and an active pan-Islamist, to reveal more clearly an important and growing trend amongst Muslims today, that is, the assimilation of socialism. There are two interpretations of this trend which disagree with the identification of Islam with socialism. One is developed primarily from Marxist circles, the other from Muslim circles, the conservative and traditionalist whose temperaments, vested interests and ideological perspectives all combine to generate an aversion to radical change. The Marxist claims that socialism cannot be derived from Islam. The most thoroughgoing presentation of this view came from the pen of Maxime Rodinson.[24]

Maxime Rodinson acknowledges the positive role of Islam in the past but what he rejects is the attempt of certain Muslim writers at constructing an ideal society, calling it socialist, based on the past. "The partial orientation of Muslim societies towards socialism has nothing to do with the precepts of Islam, except to the extent that all religions have given expression to certain fundamental human demands. But these demands could not enter, even if only to a partial extent into practice unless they were to transcend the problematic of religion. The importance of Islam in the history of human liberation is, precisely,

[24] I am not suggesting Maxime Rodinson is a Marxist but I am here referring only to his view that socialism cannot be derived from Islam.

that it has partly transcended this problematic. It has not merely recommended, it has legislated. But this legislation, conceived for a small, embryonic community, for a nascent ideological community that immediately turned itself into a state, was content to organize mutual aid within this community, ensuring a minimum of protection to the weak and poor among its members."[25]

The principles invoked by Muslim writers have not prevented exploitation and injustice committed under their aegis. Rodinson says: "These principles have not prevented, but on the contrary have camouflaged, to the greater profit of the beneficiaries, the coexistence of a class of privileged persons living in unheard-of luxury with great masses of people sunk in the most abject wretchedness – alms serving merely to give the rich a good conscience, for the price of a small number of poor persons saved from the worst consequences of their poverty. It is hard to see by what process these principles could have served any other purpose. The world knows only one certain means whereby the unprivileged sections of a society can ensure that their human rights are respected, and that is to give them at least a share in the control of political power, and, at best, to abolish as many privileges as possible, safeguarding these conquests by establishing adequate and solid institutions.

[25] Maxime Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism*, pp. 181-182. Tr. Brian Pearce. Pantheon Books, New York, 1973.

The latter may be decorated, if one so wishes, with the phraseology of Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Stoic, Kantian or any other precepts. To do this would even do justice, in a certain sense, to these precepts. But the precepts without the institutions are nothing but hot air, and shameful camouflage for fundamental evils. This is true even of the precepts of Marxism if, in practice, they serve as a cover for exploitation and subjection. Marx has at least given us the means of understanding and exposing this mechanism."[26]

As far as the judgement on facts is concerned there need not be any disagreement with Rodinson. Muslim reformers since the days of Afghani and even earlier were aware of the injustice and exploitation committed by Muslim ruling classes against the population. What they have failed to do is to suggest a political system whereby the state can play a much greater role in the regulation of production and the distribution of income, a suggestion which is new and not based on past models. Preaching the precepts without the institution is indeed blowing hot air. It is the shortcomings of Muslim writers that prevent the emergence of a fully worked out political philosophy which completely satisfies the criteria to identify it as a variant of socialism. It would be incorrect to suggest that socialism cannot be derived from Islam, arising from the inability of contemporary Muslim

[26] Ibid., p. 181.

thinkers to work out a comprehensive political philosophy in harmony with the precepts of socialism.

Mustafa Husni Assiba'i, the Syrian Muslim author and prominent leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, in his book on socialism in Islam, had indeed dwelt mainly on the precepts.[27] He agrees with nationalisation but leaves the area undefined except that which is already stated in Islamic tradition. Once again, the failure of Muslim writers to evolve a political philosophy going further beyond the statements of precepts does not mean that socialism cannot be derived from Islam. This is not to deny that in the past and at present, Muslim society has accommodated capitalism and that the upholders of capitalism have also invoked Islamic principles. Historically speaking, capitalism has performed a definite role. The question is not whether capitalism as a system in the past was wrong but whether it should be superseded by something else now.

Judging from the Islamic teachings which already include major ideas of socialism, it would be correct to suggest the unity between Islam and socialism, as Afghani, Tjokroaminoto and others have done. The Qur'an is against the restricted circulation of wealth. The verse of the Qur'an refers to property which has fallen into Muslim hands as a

[27] M.H. Assiba'i, *Sosialisme Islam*. Diponegoro, Bandung, 1969. This is an Indonesian translation by M. Abdai Ratomy of Assiba'i's widely read book *Ishtirakiyyat al-Islam, Socialism in Islam*.

result of warfare. It was to be distributed among the state, the Prophet, the needy and wayfarers, the kindred and orphans. The reason given by the Qur'an: "In order that it may not circulate between the wealthy among you."[28]

This particular instance happens to be connected with booty, but the principle is valid for all time and for other areas as well. Thus if a Muslim government today extends this principle and works it out in terms of specific measures, it would act in the spirit of Islam, that is, to prevent the circulation of wealth among the rich. A principle which is valid for succeeding times is normally expressed through historical instances. Its wider extension depends on the necessity born out of historical development.

Let us take another instance. Imam al-Bukhari (810-870), the compiler of the most authoritative collection of Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) sayings, noted that it was forbidden to meet caravans on the way to the market to buy goods from it. The one who buys goods from the caravan is a sinner for it is a kind of deceit. The Prophet forbade this practice. The town dweller should not sell the goods of a desert dweller. The desert dweller must bring his goods to the market and sell them there. He should not be deceived in fixing the price.[29]

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[28] Al-Qur'an, Al-Hashr, [59:7]

[29] *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. III, tr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *op.cit.*, pp. 206-207; "Kitab al-Buyu", no. 367-372.

The principle here is to prevent exploitation by middlemen. Both the desert dweller and the public would lose if the practice of intercepting caravans on the way to the market was to continue. A contemporary Muslim reformer shall not be looking for the caravan. He shall be looking for the principle against exploitation by the middlemen. If he could not go further than stating the principle and citing the caravan, Islam cannot be held responsible for his shortcomings. What he should have done was to work out, within the 20th century context, rules governing the practices of middlemen, or their abolition in an economic system where the state takes over their function.

The principle that ownership of property is not absolute, but subordinated to the requirements of justice, is contained in the case of Hind, the mother of Muawiyyah, founder of the Umayyad Dynasty, when she complained to the Prophet that her husband, Abu Sufyan, was a miser. She asked whether it was alright for her to take his money secretly. The Prophet replied: "You and your sons may take what is sufficient reasonably and fairly."[30] There are several other instances, such as rights to water, grassland, fuel and salt, where the right of ownership is curtailed on the basis of the public good. The problem is, again, to extend the area of this principle within the present context.

[30] Ibid., p. 226. "Kitab al-Buyu", no. 413.

Rasjidi has summarised the objective of modern socialism as follows: (1) To protest against material poverty and human suffering, (2) to pay serious attention to the welfare of the poor, the oppressed and the destitute, (3) to believe in a classless society and to accord workers their just rights, (4) to reject competition and hostility and to introduce instead fraternity and cooperation and (5) to protest against the inefficiency of the capitalist system and its effect, mass unemployment.[31] To these may be added the characteristics suggested by Durkheim. On such criteria, Islam and socialism are in harmony. The socialism of Islam has a religious foundation. It pays equal attention to the moral development of the individual, because this is a condition of achieving economic and social reforms. Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, a well-known Muslim leader in Indonesia who was several times a cabinet minister, in a lecture to Catholic students in May 1957, Djakarta, on the role of religion in economic development, stated the well-known Islamic view that poverty breeds unbelief because it induces people to do wrong. "But", he said, "the religious teaching to wipe out poverty has its complement, that is, those who can wipe out poverty are only those whose souls are free from the temptation and hold of matter."[32]

[31] H.M. Rasjidi, *Islam dan Sosialisme*, p. 44. Jajasan Islam Studi Club Indonesia, Djakarta, (undated).

[32] Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, *Peranan Agama dan Moral dalam Pembangunan Masjarakat*, p. 29. Bulan Bintang, Djakarta; 1966. Title

The question of how socialism will develop in the Muslim world of today is pertinent. There are still many Muslim scholars who refuse to identify socialism with Islam based on the idea that Islam is a perfect system that requires no qualification in terms of a social system. They claim that Islam is neither capitalism nor socialism but Islam itself. In practice, however, this attitude serves to preserve the status quo, that is the Muslim version of capitalism now prevailing in a great part of the Muslim world. This capitalism is even worse than the one of the West. At least in the West capitalism has corrected many of its earlier abuses. The capitalism which prevails in the Muslim world is extremely negative and grossly exploitative.

If socialism is conceived as a corrective to the existing situation, there is perfect justification to speak of Islamic socialism as al-Afghani, Tjokroaminoto and many others did, for it indicates a new consciousness and a new mode of action calculated to correct existing injustice. There is a need to introduce a demarcation between the thinking of Muslims who uphold the prevailing capitalist and semi-feudal order, and those who are out to replace it with something in keeping with modern and humanitarian values, an effort which is in itself Islamic. These modern and humanitarian values are also Islamic values. Islam strives

in English: *The Role of Religion and Morality in the Development of Society*. The translation is mine.

for a society where there shall be no poverty, ignorance, corruption, decadence, poor health, injustice, indignity, oppression etc.

Socialism, as a body of knowledge, as a method of thinking and analysis, as a system for reinterpreting social and economic relations, as an impulse for justice, as a system sensitive to the rights of the poor and the downtrodden, developed with the assistance of modern knowledge, is bound to be assimilated by the Muslim world although this process meets with obstacles from the prevailing regimes at the moment. Islam in the past has assimilated knowledge from other cultures and civilizations. Greek philosophy and logic were assimilated by the Muslims during the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties without the atheism of the Greek philosophers. This selective assimilation may yet happen in connection with socialism. It can be assimilated by the Muslim world without its atheistic offshoots such as certain components of the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx.

The Islamic teaching made a distinction between wahyu (prophetic revelation) and hikmah (wisdom). Hikmah is universally spread and continuously develops. The Muslim is taught by the Qur'an to acquire it wherever it may be and from whomever it may be. The Indonesian Muslim leader, formerly Prime Minister of Indonesia, Mohammed Natsir, expressed the Islamic attitude in a speech on Islam and education in Bogor, Java, in June 1934, when he said: "A

Muslim educationist should not deepen and exaggerate the antagonism between the West and the Orient. Islam only recognizes the antagonism between truth and falsehood. All that is true it shall accept though it comes from the 'West', all that is false it shall reject though it comes from the 'Orient.'"[33]

Coming back to socialism, how far has contemporary Islamic thought assimilated its contribution? The earlier works of men like Mohammed Abduh and Abdul Rahman al-Kawakibi around the turn of the century did not suggest an overhaul of the entire system in line with socialism. They pointed out existing injustice and analysed the effect of exploitation. Their thinking can be characterised as exhortative reform. It is the behavior of the wealthy that is questioned, not the system that made great accumulation of wealth possible.[34] Afghani, though he sympathised with socialism, had not paid much attention to this problem either.

A further advance in socialist Islamic thinking was made by Sayyid Qutb in 1945 when he published his book *Social Justice in Islam*.[35] Here Sayyid Qutb touched upon the role

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33 Mohammed Natsir, *Capita Selecta*, p. 60. W. van Hoeve, Bandung/the Hague, 1954.

34 On Abduh's and Kawakibi's ideas see Sami A. Hanna, George H. Gardner, *Arab Socialism*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1969.

35 Sayed Kotb, *Social Justice in Islam*, Tr. J.B. Hardie. American Council of Learned Societies, Washington, 1953. Sayed Kotb was an active member of the Muslim Brotherhood. He was sentenced to death by

of the state in economic life. He said: "It is essential not to have in the hands of private individuals or companies the resources of water, light, heat, electricity, coal, and oil, or the resources of public transport and public food supply, and other such things. For private ownership gives the power of monopoly, imposes upon the general public the will of the monopolists, and permits them to indulge in that disgraceful exploitation which we witness today."[36] He suggested the abolition of interest and in this connection he touched again upon the role of capitalists. He said: "What will happen will be that capitalists will find themselves unable to increase their wealth except by two general methods. First they may put it to some profitable use themselves in manufacture or trade or agriculture. Or second, they may put it to a profitable and helpful use by investing it in share-issuing companies, where the share values may rise or fall. Both these methods are sanctioned by Islam, and neither of them will work the slightest injury to economic life."[37] The division between areas of economic activity where the capitalist is allowed to function and where he is not allowed to function is not very clear beyond the monopoly of essential services and commodities. This is however the dilemma of socialism that permits a form of private

the Nasser regime, accused of taking part in the plot against President Nasser.

36 Ibid., p. 270.

37 Ibid., p. 274.

capitalist enterprise. It is here that more thinking has to be done amongst those who want to preach Islamic socialism.

To grasp the problem of socialism in the Islamic world, a distinction has to be made between socialism as a body of philosophical and moral precepts and socialism as an immediate programme for action embodying the precepts. It is at the level of programme that Islamic socialism is very much lacking. By programme I mean a set of principles and methods to apply to the Muslim world, in the context of the present, comparable with what is available in communism and in Western socialism. It should neither be pure philosophy nor discrete programmes for particular countries. For instance, what should the general Islamic socialist theory of land ownership, of monopoly, of private enterprise etc. be? The programmes for particular countries shall embody these theories.

In the Muslim world today, there are three noticeable trends. The first and most influential is the defence of the status quo with its capitalist and semi-feudal ideology couched in Islamic or nationalistic terms. The second is the nationalist, socialist and communist trend inspired by Western thought. The third is the Islamic reformist trend of which Islamic socialism is a part. Of all the trends, Islamic socialism is the weakest but it has the greatest potential for future development for it is the trend that is producing a great deal of thinking and writing, judging from the amount

produced. It is capable of winning adherents from the rest of those who are against the status quo. This shall only take place if thinkers of a higher calibre emerge. Judging by the history of the last hundred years, thinkers among Muslims have emerged by far much more from the reformist and Islamic socialist trend. The development of reformist thinking moves more and more towards Islamic socialism. Just as socialism emerged and became incorporated into Western society, the same may happen in the Muslim world.

A component which is still lacking in contemporary Islamic thought is the analysis of ideology and the related problem of false consciousness as applied to Muslim society and its ruling elites. A critical study of existing societies and the role of their ruling classes is much needed. It is by such studies inspired by Islamic socialism that adherents to the trend will increase and become a significant force. Hence the future of Islamic socialism depends on the emergence of thinkers who could develop the conception of Islamic socialism further than al-Afghani and recent writers.[38]

The impulse towards socialism and the protest against injustice have been alive amongst Muslims for some time. Already in 1913, an Indian Muslim barrister and an active pan-Islamist, Shaikh Mushir Hosain Kidwai, published

[38] This is a general problem affecting the Third World. On the necessity of thinkers see Syed Hussein Alatas, *Intellectuals in Developing Societies*, Frank Cass, London, 1976.

a booklet on Islam and socialism.[39] Kidwai was the only contributor to *The Islamic Review*, a Muslim monthly from London which had a wide readership amongst educated Muslims, who again and again mentioned the connection between Islam and socialism. Years later he hoped that the League of Nations would be run on socialist principles. He saw Islam as a kind of socialism.[40]

The above appraisal of Islam and socialism was made before the Russian Revolution. The same was made by a British Muslim in January 1917.[41] In 1919 Kidwai cautioned Muslims to wait and see what Bolshevism really was before making any judgement.[42] Ten years later he

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39 S.M.H. Kidwai, *Islam and Socialism*, Luzac, London, 1913. I was not able to get this booklet. It was first published in 1909.

40 S.M.H. Kidwai, "Christianity and the League of Nations", *The Islamic Review*, vol. VII, no. 1, 1919. He said of Muhammad and Umar: "The state they founded was worked on absolute socialistic lines for about thirty years. But why that, and that socialism alone proved workable was simply because it was established on most solid foundation, i.e. because the character and moral caliber of individuals was elevated to the noblest and highest pinnacle." p. 54.

41 J. Parkinson, "Muhammad as Social Reformer", *The Islamic Review*, vol. V, no. 1, 1917. He said: "The average European, when he reads the heading of this article, will probably shrug his shoulders and smile with self-satisfaction, thinking that between the man Muhammad and the term Socialist there is no connecting link. Yet the social, let me say Socialist, reforms taught by the Prophet and introduced by him in his legislation permeate the entire body politic of Islam." p.40.

42 S.M.H. Kidwai, "Bolshevism and Islam", *The Islamic Review*, p.333, vol. VII, nos. 7 & 8, 1919.

gave his judgement. He rejected the "dictatorship of the proletariat" but applauded the abolition of landlordism.[43] Kidwai was one of the earliest Muslims who desired to see Islamic socialism emerge. Apparently, his writings had some influence on Tjokroaminoto.*

The Islamic Review itself, started in 1913, developed an outlook of exhortative reform. Some of their contributors mistook Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) exemplary conduct and social relations for socialism. Socialism is not simply the concern for the welfare of society, but such a concern linked with a system whereby the state regulates economic life in the direction of welfare for the majority, not the enrichment of a minority. It has developed certain methods of analysis; it has raised certain new problems; it has revised our conception of property, of what is permissible in economic action, of the relative worth of classes, of the role of capital and the state, of the significance of labour etc.

The assimilation of socialism by contemporary Islam shall be the most important development in the history of the Muslim world. The method of acquiring social justice has been most developed by socialism. Islamic principles,

[43] S.M.H. Kidwai, "Two Islamic Up-To-Date Reforms Initiated Thirteen Centuries Ago", *The Islamic Review*, p. 365, vol. XVII, no. 10, 1929.

* Translator's note: See translator's introduction on Tjokroaminoto's use of Kidwai's thought.

supported by the methods and new insights developed by socialism, shall be most suitable for the Muslim world. This effort should be made without the sense of arrogance associated with the time and the generation, for the Prophet of Islam said: "My people are like the rain; it not being known whether the first or the last of it is better."[44]

[44] *Mishkat al-Masabih, op.cit.*, vol. IV, p. 1384.

DR MAHATHIR ONCE AGAIN

On Thursday, 24 September 1976, Dr Mahathir's book, titled *Menghadapi Cabaran* (*Facing the Challenge*),* arrived in my hands.[1] When this happened, this work of mine, *Islam and Socialism*, had just been typed out. After reading the contents of Dr Mahathir's book, it is clear that his opinions on the relationship between Islam and socialism as well as some other issues are contrary to what I have advanced in this book. Dr Mahathir sees conflict between Islam and socialism. He does not know that there are different types of socialism. What was discussed was the strand of European socialism which does not prioritise religion. I do not need to respond to this anymore because my book already provides the answer.

There are some other opinions of Dr Mahathir which

* Translator's note: Published in English in 1986 as *The Challenge*, by Pelanduk Publications.

1 Mahathir Mohamad. *Menghadapi Cabaran*, Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1976.

need to be discussed, even though these discussions will be considered by Dr Mahathir as a waste of time.[2] This attitude goes against Islamic tradition. In the history of Islam, discussions on important issues are strongly encouraged. Just as there will definitely be bad discussions, there will also be bad cabinets. This will not be a reason to vilify those who want to fight for a good cabinet. I do not consider discussing Dr Mahathir's book as a bad activity, as long as Dr Mahathir does not consider his writing to be rotten. If the object does not smell bad, it is good to smell it.

Apart from that, only a mushrik* denies the right of others to discuss their opinions. A writer must not consider his writing to be perfect. For Muslims, only one book is perfect, and that is the Qur'an. Dr Mahathir is not a mushrik and has never claimed that his writing is perfect. For this reason, Dr Mahathir would agree with me that his writing should be discussed.

Considering the above, Dr Mahathir's opinions against polemics are slightly odd and should be explained by him. What does he mean by polemics? Where are his examples? Why is he so secretive? Take a look at this example. "Every time an idea is mooted, all energies and thoughts are utilized not for its implementation but rather in subjecting it to a protracted debate. The habit of entering into polemics has

2 Ibid., see p. 1, that polemics are of no benefit and are only a waste.

* Translator's note: One who associates partners with God.

become so much a part of the Malays that there are some who write books for the purpose of launching a series of polemics. The notion is that polemics will help sharpen the mind and is an intellectual exercise. Must the Malays spend their time on intellectual exercises? Is it not more important that they act to overcome the thousand and one problems confronting them?"[3]

Who is the writer Dr Mahathir is referring to? I think that he his referring to me. In 1972, my book, *Siapa Yang Salah*, was published. It was an argument against the book *Revolusi Mental* and Dr Mahathir's book, *The Malay Dilemma*. In *Siapa Yang Salah* I invited Dr Mahathir to have a discussion with me on his ideas regarding the main reasons why the Malay community has fallen behind. This was what I said: "Finally, I hope that the readers' attention to the problem of the progress of the Malays will increase. It would be best if Dr Mahathir is willing to have a discussion on this issue with me in the press, specifically concerning his writing. A discussion in the press will allow for a wider explanation of opinions. What is less clear can be elaborated. What has not been stated can be stated. Deeper questions can be raised. An intellectual atmosphere can be preserved

[3] Ibid., p. 1 [p. 1]. Translator's note: Page numbers in square brackets refer to the English translation of *Menghadapi Cabaran*. Mahathir Mohamad, *The Challenge*, Pelanduk Publications, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, 1986.

in a discussion in the press."[4]

Till now, Dr Mahathir has not responded to the invitation. Is it fair for someone to write a book and to think that his efforts are necessary for society and are not a waste of time, while wanting to discuss it is considered a waste of time? I have never described discussions on important issues as an intellectual exercise. Who is the writer in question? Why was Dr Mahathir not brave enough to mention his name? Is it taboo if his name is mentioned?

Dr Mahathir's own book is filled with attacks on certain groups and situations, some of which are heartbreaking and crippling. Dr Mahathir said: "But we can no longer be so sure that the Islamic faith of the Malays will remain an invincible fortress to the communists. Though not many, there are Malays who are prepared to become communists. In Indonesia, for instance, many Muslims renounced their religion and at one time went all out to attain communist aspirations. In some Arab States and in Albania, there are Muslims who have renounced Islam and set up governments with communist or semi-communist ideologies. In the southern parts of the Soviet Union, descendants of Muslims no longer believe in Islam..."[5]

Should not the above statement be discussed? Why must

4 Syed Hussein Alatas, *Siapa Yang Salah*, pp. 24-25. Pustaka Nasional, Singapore, 1972. Third edition, 1974.

5 Mahathir Mohamad, *op. cit.*, p. 62 [p. 84].

we be less confident that the religious faith of the Malays will remain a bulwark against communism? The explanations regarding the ways in which the communists will influence Muslims cannot be used as a reason to conclude that we must be less confident about the strength of the religious faith of the Malays. What is meant by this? Such statements could give rise to a crippling influence on Muslims in combatting the communists. Would Dr Mahathir consider it a waste of time if he were to entertain my request here for his statement to be explained more directly or to be replaced with less ambiguous words?

Dr Mahathir is not a scholar of the social sciences. His knowledge of many issues which he discusses is very limited. But I think that his writings should not be left without criticisms or disagreements, because his writings, even though they are of very mediocre quality, will influence at least a group of readers, especially now because of his position as Deputy Prime Minister. Furthermore, Dr Mahathir is one of the leading authorities who has made the effort to write books and provide his views on important issues concerning Malay society, apart from the group that published *Revolusi Mental*. On an individual basis, only Dr Mahathir and Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra have written books while in positions of authority. Datuk Senu bin Abdul Rahman recently wrote a pamphlet.

The reason for my interest in Dr Mahathir's writings is not because he is a minister. I do not mean to criticise

ministers. I criticised his book *The Malay Dilemma* before he became the Minister of Education.

Even if Dr Mahathir later becomes the Prime Minister or returns to his clinic in Alor Setar, and writes another book, I will continue to pay attention to him. This should be considered a form of appreciation for Dr Mahathir because he has succeeded in raising issues for discussion, even though he does not consider polemical discussions to be constructive. Apart from the above, Dr Mahathir's writings are sometimes organised and sometimes his logic is tangled. The tangled logic will lead us astray.

An example is Dr Mahathir's explanation of the efforts of communists to influence Malays. Since 1948, said Dr Mahathir, the communists have aspired to spread their influence. Important changes have occurred today compared to the years between 1948 and 1960, that is, most Malays have begun to oppose their leaders who are in power. Dr Mahathir said: "There is a rift in Malay solidarity. And the rift is where it matters most i.e. between a large section of the Malays and their leaders who hold power in the Government. At one time only the communists opposed the Government (with support from some non-Malays). But today the Malays themselves are opposing the government and hurling all sorts of accusations at Government leaders."[6]

[6] Ibid., p. 65 [p. 88].

Dr Mahathir then said: "In war tactics, friendship between two groups attacking the enemy is not necessary. What makes the attacks effective is that they are carried out simultaneously. The communists oppose the Government. The Malays too oppose the Government. Although the Malays are neither friends nor allies of the communists, by attacking the Government when it is facing communist attack, they are helping the communist cause."[7] Let us examine the logic and deviating meanings which have been put forth by Dr Mahathir. Firstly, is it true that the relationship between the Malays and government leaders has become fractured? How did that consequence arise? What is the evidence? Secondly, Dr Mahathir has made a huge mistake which would not be forgiven if it was made by an undergraduate student, what more by a Minister of Education. Dr Mahathir used the same word, "attack", to refer to the communist and Malay opposition to the government. In fact, the difference between the two is huge. Communist attacks are illegal, subversive and armed. The opposition of the Malays follows the law, does not use the force of arms and is not subversive.

It is these statements by Dr Mahathir which help the communists. The communists have repeatedly said that the government does not have the support of the people. Now Dr Mahathir himself admits that most Malays oppose

7 Ibid., p. 65 [p. 88].

the government. Because this statement was made by a Deputy Prime Minister, I think its impact will be profound. I am not confident that other UMNO leaders, especially Datuk Hussein Onn, agree with Dr Mahathir's opinion. I myself, not a member of UMNO, cannot be certain that most Malays oppose the government and have a fractured relationship with it. This communist idea, which is now strengthened by the same idea from Dr Mahathir, needs to be grounded in strong reasons. The communists use it as propaganda in the war of nerves, but from Dr Mahathir we hope for an opinion which is supported by strong evidence, especially if that opinion is the same as that of the country's enemy.

Dr Mahathir's logic in the above excerpt is very odd. He said that Malays are helping the communists because they are also attacking the government. They should actually be helping the government. What is actually meant by the word "attack" as used by Dr Mahathir with reference to the Malays? Most of these Malays' statements express dissatisfaction with the government or urge the government to act justly, to eradicate corruption and to provide employment opportunities. Such actions which are honest and sincere are encouraged in Islam. As the Qur'an states: "God does not like bad words to be made public unless someone has been wronged."[8]

[8] *Al-Qur'an*, An-Nisa', [4:148].

According to the Qur'an, good deeds include opposing injustice bravely and not in a cowardly manner.[9] Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that it is the duty of Muslims to help the oppressed and influence the oppressors to stop oppressing.[10] In our current situation, in Malaysia, these teachings of Islam still apply. The government and its ministers should be criticised if they are wrong or not understood. If the communists feel that they have made gains, it is because those who are wrong are not the Malays, but the government if they do wrong. Dr Mahathir blames the Malays who criticise the government.

This opinion of Dr Mahathir's is difficult to put into practice. If I were asked to put it into practice, I would be in contradiction with Islam. Those who are wrong are ignored while those who criticise are wrong. If corruption is rampant amongst government officials, the people have to be silent because if they were to criticise the government they would be considered to be helping the communists. Such an opinion will kill our democracy, something which the communists strongly desire. If there are no voices against wrongdoing, or voices which express alternative opinions, what will happen to democracy?

If Dr Mahathir thinks along the lines of Islam, the

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9 *Al-Qur'an*, Ash-Shuraa [42:39].

10 See *Sahih al-Bukhari*, "Kitab al-Luqata", no. 624, vol. 3, tr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *op.cit.*, p. 374.

ones he will accuse of helping the communists are not the people who criticise wrongdoings, but those who actually do wrong. What is needed is advice so that the government acts justly and honestly, and so that the people criticise based on factual foundations, and not on incitement or lies. If the wrongdoings of the government continue, then it will be easy to for enemies to topple it. Those who want to prevent this from happening must oppose such malpractice so that the country will be protected from falling into the hands of the enemy. We would be providing the materials for them to ignite anti-government sentiments.

We can relate the situation here with what was illustrated by Datuk Senu bin Abdul Rahman. Datuk Senu said: "While Government leaders are at loggerheads with one another or prioritise their own interests more than the interests of the country, there is a great possibility that incitement by parties such as these communists will lead to a 'counter coup' being slowly born, and in a situation of instability and disunity, chaos will erupt and consequently, democracy will disappear."[11] The question is, do the people have to keep quiet and watch their leaders prioritise themselves more than the interests of the country? If we follow Dr Mahathir, the people must indeed be silent because their criticisms will help the communists. If this happens, a situation will

[11] Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman, *Keselamatan Sudah Tidak Terjamin*, p. 28. Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1976.

arise where only the communists will voice their criticisms against the government, screaming for justice, to the extent that eventually they will gain the trust of the people as the sole fighters for justice. This is a situation which will help the communists.

The silence of the people will not stop the communists from screaming. Their voices will be even louder. We as citizens who are not communist must make our voices heard so that our dissatisfaction with some of the actions of powerful leaders, or some corrupt government officials, will be channeled towards those who support the ideals of the Malaysian Constitution, so that they will follow a leadership which is not communist. If this fact is not acknowledged, Malaysia's future will be catastrophic. Corruption will be rampant. Democracy will disappear. The people will secretly criticise the government. Armed conflict with the communists will increase. Malaysia will eventually suffer the fate of the Thamud community.

There is another thought of Dr Mahathir's which is very odd. He said: "Some may hold that the fall of the South Vietnamese Government was deserved because it was corrupt and cruel. But the defeat of the South Vietnamese government did not mean victory for the leaders of the Buddhists or the students. It was the communists who won. The South Vietnamese lost not only the freedom to oppose and demonstrate, but freedom of worship as well. The Buddhists and the students did not get what they had fought

for and lost what they had."[12] The situation described here is true. The question is, were the efforts of the Buddhists to replace their government wrong? They were the ones who wanted to stop the wrongdoings of the government. Because they failed, the communists succeeded. A lesson for us to learn from, those who oppose an evil government, so that the communists will not succeed. They must be strengthened and not destroyed. The fate of the corrupt government which destroyed the non-communist opposition was that they were defeated by the communists. It is not the corrupt government which is advised by Dr Mahathir, but the people who oppose corruption. This is why I said earlier that I would have to contradict Islam if I wanted to follow in the footsteps of Dr Mahathir.

Apart from that, if the Buddhists in Vietnam were to keep silent, would this save the government? Of course not! According to God's laws, an evil government will be destroyed by its enemies. Perhaps Dr Mahathir meant that in the face of the communists, we should support a corrupt and cruel government? It is this type of government which will help the communists succeed. The only way to eradicate the influence of the communists is to form a government which is just, honest and far-sighted, so that the people's support for the government will rise as a big wave in the struggle against the communists.

[12] Mahathir Mohamad, *op.cit.*, p. 66. [p. 89].

What is most surprising is Dr Mahathir's statement regarding those who criticise the government. This statement is an incitement and not a just and fair comment. Dr Mahathir said: "In the past it was only the Malay socialists who did not criticize the communists. Now the Malays who are not socialist and who are strong in their religious faith also do not criticize the communists. They focus their criticisms on the government. They emphasize that it is better for Muslims not to support their leaders even though such an act will make it easier for the communists to kill those leaders. In other words, they not only do not criticize the communists but are willing to see the communists succeed."[13]

I first want to ask, who are these Muslims who do not criticise the communists? Who are these Muslims who are willing to see the communists succeed? Perhaps Dr Mahathir is referring to me. Maybe Dr Mahathir read my speech, "Islam dan Pembangunan Jiwa" ("Islam and the Development of the Spirit"), at the Fourth Annual Congress of the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement, College Islam, Klang, 7 December 1975. This speech was printed and distributed to peoples' representatives, leaders of political parties and workers' unions.

In this speech I said this: "Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) once said that religion serves as advice for the

[13] Ibid., p. 67 [p.89].

leaders of the Muslim community and the general public. The task of advising leaders should be carried out at all times. Sometimes this advice should be given without being asked for. The advice I would like to give today is for the government to rethink our strategy to deal with the guerillas in the forests. For some time now members of the police force have been killed. The government has not succeeded in stopping or catching the killers. Whoever the guerillas want killed, will be killed, including the ministers. For their safety, they need to be guarded more strictly, and, more importantly, they need to capture the hearts of the people. The killers will bravely take action if it is found that the government is disliked by the people. If the people do not care about the fate of the ministers, no police in the world can guarantee their lives. That is why government policy needs to be extremely just and prudent, not only protecting certain people, and suppressing the freedom of the people. The independence of the press has been suppressed in various ways and has led to the proliferation of poison-pen letters. A wise leadership will not rely on restrictive means through the law. More restrictions evoke more feelings of rebellion in the soul."*

* Tranlsator's note: Syed Hussein Alatas, "Islam dan Pembangunan Jiwa" ("Islam and the Development of the Spirit"), speech delivered at the Fourth Annual Congress of the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement, College Islam, Klang, 7 December 1975.

The above is certainly not a statement which agrees with seeing the communists succeed. Instead I have suggested ways to eliminate the influence of the communists. There is a big difference between Dr Mahathir's method and my method. According to Dr Mahathir, the people must support the existing leaders even if they allow corruption and have no ability to lead. In my opinion, if we want to succeed in the fight against the communists, we must dismiss corrupt leaders who ruin the country, then only will we succeed. I am not only referring to corrupt leaders of UMNO but also other parties. I have acknowledged several times that there are leaders in UMNO who are honest. The issue is not about the party but about the people, there are some who ruin the country and some who build it.

My writings from 20 years ago have refuted the communist ideology more than ten of Dr Mahathir's writings have. Maybe this is not known by Dr Mahathir. Studies on the successful history of the communists in Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have concluded that communism succeeded because of the weakness of the government it targeted, which was overcome by the germs of corruption and had gradually defeated all opposition to corruption.

One more conclusion is the bankrupt opinion of the government which always forces the people to accept corrupt leaders. This was the advice of the Kuomintang in

China. If in the fight against the communists, we expect the people to support a government which is corrupt, stupid, insincere, biased, unjust, in favor of mischievous capitalists, whose parliamentary seats are filled by bootlickers or dishonest politicians, it is the same as us supporting the Kuomintang which caused the fall of China to the communists. The ills of the Kuomintang arose in Malaysia not only among some of the Chinese, but also among some Malays and Indians.

It is not only honest people who are anti-communist. The corrupt are also anti-communist. Those who are anti-communist, because of their ideals in life, should be careful so as to ensure that they are not manipulated by the corrupt and mischievous capitalists. The corrupt must be marginalised. This corrupt group also makes it easier for the communists to infiltrate political parties and government channels. Decadence and corruption are the most effective weapons in the covert warfare of the communists. If a leader is corrupt or decadent, he would be easily manipulated by the underground communists. That is why the movement to clean up the government must be implemented as an absolute condition in order for our fight against the communists to succeed. This is what should have been strongly suggested by Dr Mahathir if he really understood the process which leads to a successful communist revolution.

It is also not right to criticise all those who disagree with some of the government's actions, but to unite all those

who reject communism on the basis of a struggle which is honest and just, and led by people who are of good morals and thought. If we want to clean the floor, do not use a dirty broom. Only a fool or an insincere person would use a dirty broom to clean the floor.

Dr Mahathir accused those who opposed the wrongdoings of some government leaders of helping the communists. What about those who criticise Malay cultural values? Does this not also help the communists since such actions will break the bonds of loyalty to one's culture to the extent that they would be easily influenced by the communist trend? Dr Mahathir himself has criticised the values of Malay society and said that they impede progress.[14] I respect Dr Mahathir's right to comment on and criticise Malay society. But the right to criticise Dr Mahathir's opinions should also be respected.

The Mahathir of 1970 needs to face the Mahathir of 1976. While Dr Mahathir was outside UMNO, after he was sacked, he published a book in Singapore titled *The Malay Dilemma*. Here he criticised the leaders of the Alliance. He said that it was their political power which almost completely corrupted the thinking of its leaders. UMNO is

[14] Mahathir Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, p. 173. Asia-Pacific Press, Singapore, 1970. Several attitudes and values of Malay society are thought to impede progress. See *Revolusi Mental* and my response, *Siapa Yang Salah*.

the one that takes the greatest responsibility for the collapse which the Alliance government gradually experienced almost immediately since the moment of independence. Mahathir further criticised UMNO for exercising its power on the basis of a system of patronage and disguised coercion through the power of the government and not the power of the party.

The leaders of UMNO, said Dr Mahathir, ignored the wishes of the people. People who are mediocre occupy the cabinet. The government, said Dr Mahathir, was contemptuous of criticism. It ignored public opinion.[15] Dr Mahathir launched strong criticisms regarding the UMNO leadership. I now wish to ask Dr Mahathir, was the attitude of the Mahathir in 1970 considered, although unintentional, as helping the communists? According to the Mahathir of 1976, the Mahathir of 1970 helped the communists.

I was happier with the Mahathir of 1970 because he upheld the right of the people to criticise the government. Perhaps the Mahathir of 1970 can still influence the Mahathir of 1976. God willing! Hopefully my discussion on several of his opinions are not considered wasteful, because Dr Mahathir himself discussed and criticised the values of Malay society and UMNO in *The Malay Dilemma* and I do not consider his efforts to be wasteful.

[15] Ibid., pp. 8-15.

Aku bermimpi main seruling,
Hadapan bunga di tepi kolam.
Biarkan nasib aku terguling,
Asalkan bangsa tidak tenggelam.

I dream of playing the flute,
by the pond where the flowers stood.
Let my fate falter,
*as long as the nation does not go under.**

* Translator's note: This poem was originally written in Malay by the author. I wrote the English translation, with the assistance of Annaliza Bakri.

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. . . The meaning of the phrase "Islam is socialist in nature" merely acts as a categorisation into a particular system of society based on the features that characterise it as socialist. Those who are against Islam being considered as socialist either do not understand the meaning of certain words or want to uphold the current capitalist system.

This book, by the preeminent Malaysian sociologist, Professor Dr Syed Hussein Alatas, is the translation of the Malay *Islam dan Sosialisme* (Petaling Jaya, Gerakbudaya, 2020), which first appeared in 1976 as *Islam dan Sosialisma* (Pulau Pinang, Seruan Masa). Despite its size, the book covers important and critical issues, including the relationship between religion and socialism, the different types of socialism, as well as the public's unease about the similarities and differences between socialism and communism. Most importantly, Professor Alatas calls upon us to fight the injustices of capitalism. More than 40 years after its original publication, his ideas are still relevant today.

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